April 29, 1985

THE NEW YORKER

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

A CONSCIENTIOUS CALENDAR OF EVENTS OF INTEREST

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THE THEATRE

PLAYS AND MUSICALS

Aren't We All?—*A revival of Frederick Lonsdale's 1923 comedy, imported from London, starring Rex Harrison, Claudette Colbert, Lynn Redgrave, George Rose, and Jeremy Brett. Directed by Clifford Williams. Previews through Sunday, April 28. Opens officially on Monday, April 29.* (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 245-3430. Tuesdays, except April 30, through Saturdays at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

As Is—This touching play by William M. Hoffman concerns a personable young homosexual who is afflicted with AIDS, and is also a documentary of sorts about his milieu in this city. The lively, impressionistic performance was directed by Marshall W. Mason, and the acting by the large cast, several of whom appear in multiple roles, is just right. With Jonathan Hogan and Jonathan Hadary. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/25/85.) Reopens at a new theatre with previews Friday through Tuesday, April 26-30, and an official opening on Wednesday, May 1. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:45. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2. Special performances Sunday, April 28, at 3 and 7.)

Big River—*A musical based on Mark Twain's novel "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," with a score and lyrics by Roger Miller and a book by William Hauptman. Staged by Des McAnuff. Previews Wednesday, April 24. Opens officially on Thursday, April 25.* (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Biloxi Blues—A further chapter in the life story of Eugene Morris Jerome, a literary stand-in for the author, Neil Simon. The time is 1943, Eugene is in the Army, and his adventures in Biloxi are truly not to be believed. Matthew Broderick and the rest of the cast are first-rate. The director, Gene Saks, has worked hard to squeeze the last drop of humor out of this peculiar fruit. (4/8/85) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 757-8646. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

An Enemy of the People—Roy Dotrice gives a marvellous performance as Dr. Stockmann, missing none of the complexity or the humor in the role, in the Roundabout's satisfying production of Ibsen's play. Directed by Frank Hauser, who was also its co-translator. (4/22/85) (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2.)

Episode 26—*A play by Howard Korder.* (Little Theatre at the Lambs, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Thursdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

Equity Library Theatre—*A revival of Ira Levin's 1978 thriller* **DEATHTRAP** *is the seventh in this season's series of eight productions.* (103rd St. and Riverside Dr. Nightly at 8. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 2:30. Closes Sunday, April 28. For information about tickets, for which contributions are requested, call 663-2028.)

The Foreigner—A very funny play by (and with) Larry Shue, with good performances by every single member of the company, most notably by Kevin Geer as a lovable half-wit. Jerry Zaks was the admirable director. (11/19/84) (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St., near Astor Pl. 254-4370. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Grind—Ben Vereen, Leilani Jones, Timothy Nolen, and Stubby Kaye in an eloquent and troubling musical about a Chicago burlesque house in 1933. The book is by Fay Kanin, the music is by Larry Grossman, and the lyrics are by Ellen Fitzhugh. Harold Prince directed. (4/22/85) (Mark Hellinger, 237 W. 51st St. 757-7064. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Hannah Senesh—*A monologue based on the diaries and poems of the Zionist heroine. Lori Wilner is the monologuist. Written and directed by David Schechter, with music by Steven Lutvak, Elizabeth Swados, and Mr. Schechter.* (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020. Wednesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Wednesdays at 2:30, and Sundays at 2:30 and 5:30.)

Joe Egg—A superb performance of Peter Nichols' matchless bleak comedy. Jim Dale and Stockard Channing are the parents of the hopelessly brain-damaged child, and they are supported by John Tillinger, Margaret Hilton, Joanna Gleason, and Tenney Walsh. Arvin Brown was the director. (1/14/85) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The King and I—Yul Brynner is as charming as ever, and so is the show that he has been starring in since the Civil War. Attendance is obligatory. (1/14/85) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Leader of the Pack—Ellie Greenwich was a popular songwriter of the pre-Beatles era. Here are her songs, as well as Ellie herself. (4/22/85) (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Lies and Legends: The Musical Stories of Harry Chapin—*A musical entertainment using works by the late composer. Opens Wednesday, April 24.* (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120. Opening-night curtain at 6:30; thereafter, Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Light Opera of Manhattan—Two Victor Herbert productions. Through Sunday, April 28: **MLLE. MODISTE**. . . . ¶ Starting Wednesday, May 1: **NAUGHTY MARIETTA**. (334 E. 74th St. 861-2288. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays at 2, and Saturdays and Sundays at 3:30.)

Maneuvers—*An English suspense thriller by Catherine Muschamp.* (South Street Theatre,

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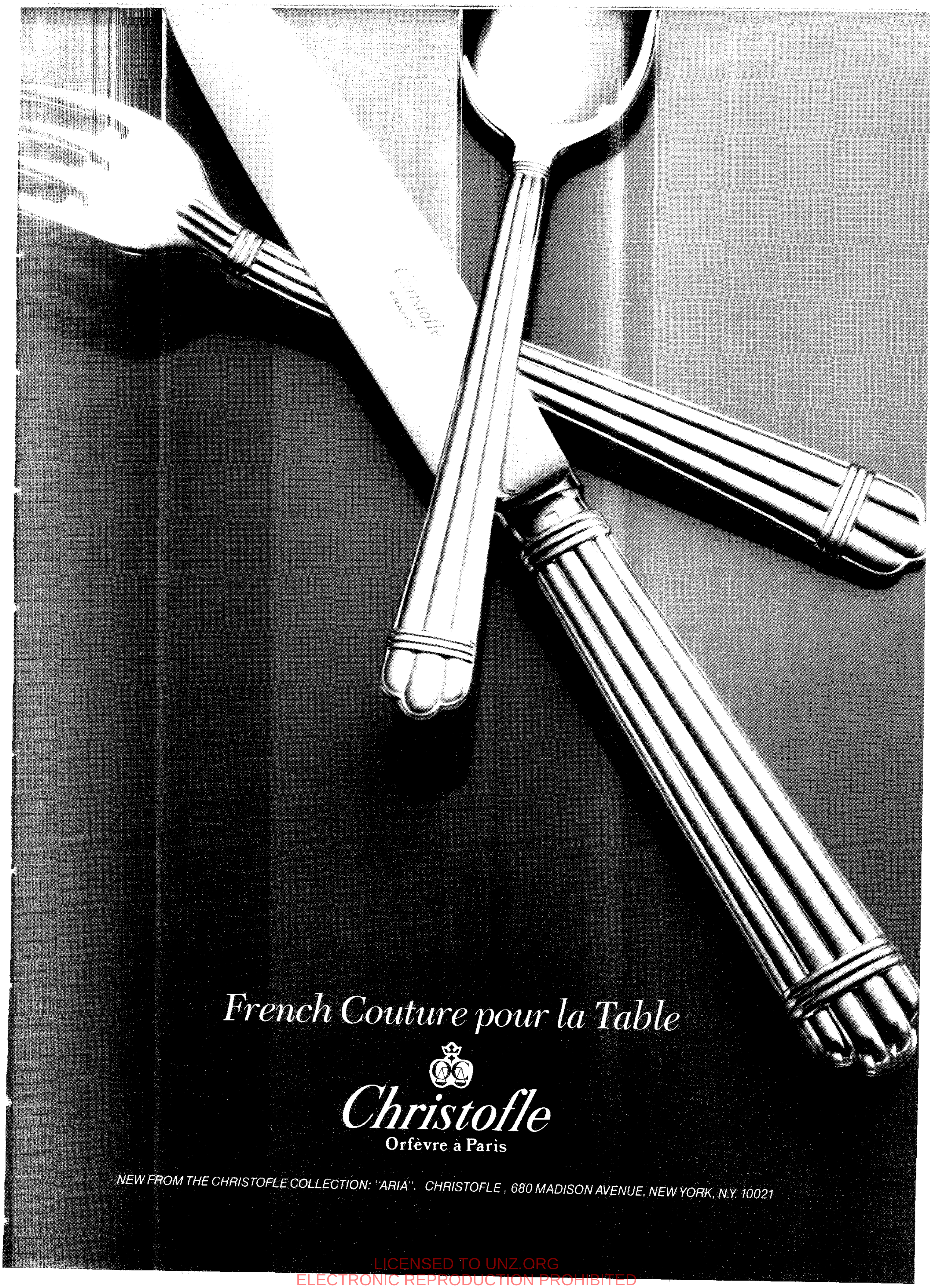

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom—A first-rate play by August Wilson about some black performers of the blues in Chicago fifty-odd years ago—sometimes funny and, at the end, terrifying. Its well-drawn characters and eloquent street language provide an exceptionally robust and rewarding evening in the theatre. Lloyd Richards directed the fine cast. (10/22/84) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Mirror Repertory Company—Three in a series of four revivals performed in alternating repertory. **vivat! vivat regina!:** A poky presentation of Robert Bolt's shallow play about Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I, but with a splendid performance by Geraldine Page as Elizabeth. (3/25/85) . . . **the madwoman of chaillot:** Geraldine Page gives a glorious performance in the title role of this spirited revival of Giraudoux's classic comedy. (2/11/85) . . . **clarence:** A disastrous production of Booth Tarkington's play. (2/25/85) (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 3. For tickets and information about play scheduling, call 223-6440.)

Negro Ensemble Company—A rather beguiling, if lightweight, farce, by the Jamaican playwright Trevor Rhone, **two can play** is about a middle-aged Jamaican couple. The husband is a blowhard; the wife is put upon in every way, until she flies to Miami and comes back a changed woman. The first act is too intricate for its own good, but the second act is clear and funny. The actors—Hazel J. Medina and Sullivan H. Walker—couldn't be better. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-8545. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 8:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays at 3 and Sundays at 2:30. Closes Sunday, May 5.)

The Normal Heart—An interminable, trashy non-play about AIDS, and its victims in the homosexual community of this city, who are compared to the Jews of the Holocaust. The names Hitler, Roosevelt, Morgenthau, and, eventually, Mayor Koch are dropped with equal contempt. The evening is an insult to its audience and, what is far more serious, to the sufferers from this dreadful, seemingly hopeless disease. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Pack of Lies—A modest domestic melodrama about a pair of professional spies and the effect of their capture on the lives of their closest friends, who have suspected nothing. The cast includes Rosemary Harris, Patrick McGoohan, George N. Martin, and Dana Ivey. The author is Hugh Whitemore. (2/25/85) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Penn & Teller—A sublime combination of conjuring and comedy. Penn Jillette does the talking; Teller is silent. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8; Fridays at 8 and 11; and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 3.)

Salonika—Louise Page's mysterious, fascinating play—an English import—takes place in the present but is literally haunted by the past. The setting is the beach at Salonika in Greece, where a great disaster befell the British Army during the First World War. The acting is exceptionally good: Jessica Tandy plays an old woman who has come to put flowers on her husband's grave, Elizabeth Wilson plays her spinster daughter, and David Strathairn, Thomas Hill, and Maxwell Caulfield appear in the other roles. John Madden was the excellent director. (4/15/85) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 3.)

The Singular Dorothy Parker—Jane Connell in a one-woman show based on the life and writings of Miss Parker. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S., at Sheridan Sq. 691-6226. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Williamsburgh
SAVINGS
BANK
DOWNTOWN
86
86
Hank Blaustein

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Strange Interlude—O'Neill's failed attempt at a tragic play has been turned into a near farce by its English director, Keith Hack. The cast of this misadventure is headed by Glenda Jackson and Edward Petherbridge. (3/4/85) (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 6:45. Matinées Wednesdays and Sundays at 2. Closes Sunday, May 5.)

3 Guys Naked from the Waist Down—John Kassir, Scott Bakula, and Jerry Colker play three standup comedians who leave New York for Hollywood in this satiric and most original musical comedy. Mr. Colker wrote the book and lyrics, and Michael Rupert wrote the bountiful, engaging score. The effective scenery, costumes, and lighting were by Clarke Dunham, Tom McKinley, and Ken Billington. (2/18/85) (Minetta Lane, 18-22 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10:15; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Tracers—The eight good actors are Vietnam veterans, and the effective play is based on actual war experiences. It was conceived and directed by John DiFusco, and it is accompanied throughout by rock music. (2/4/85) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Sundays at 3.)

Young Playwrights Festival—Three of the four plays here presented are by beginners, and the oldest of them is eighteen; the directors and actors, on the other hand, are experienced and agile. (4/22/85) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Wednesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Saturday and Sunday at 3. Closes Sunday, April 28.)

Long Runs—**brighton beach memoirs:** Neil Simon's autobiographical comedy. (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **la cage aux folles:** A big, handsomely designed and handsomely costumed musical starring George Hearn and Van Johnson. The book, by Harvey Fierstein, is sentimental nonsense, but the music, by Jerry Herman, is pleasantly tuneful. Everybody else in New York intends to see the show, so why not you? (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 757-2626. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **cats:** A musical version of T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, choreography by Gillian Lynne, and direction (and some lyrics) by Trevor Nunn. A superb spectacle, which may run for years and give cats the right to vote and hold office. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **a chorus line:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **dreamgirls:** Michael Bennett's whiz-bang and totally synthetic musical about show biz. The breeze is terrific. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **the fantasticks:** 10,400 performances so far. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **fool for love:** Sam Shepard's play—mysterious, funny, and beautiful—is about two battling, loving lovers in a motel room at the edge of the Mojave Desert and about many other matters as well. Katherine Cortez and David Andrews have the leading roles. Mr. Shepard directed. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 6 and 8:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **42nd street:** Pleasantly old-fashioned choreography by the late Gower Champion and a few classic songs enliven an otherwise inert pastiche of the Warner Brothers movie that made Ruby Keeler a star. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **hurlyburly:** David Rabe's wry, brilliant comedy about la vie de bohême in Hollywood is very well performed under Mike Nichols' dynamic direction. With Frank Langella, Ron Silver, Christine Baranski, Susan Anton, Danny Aiello, and Jerry Stiller. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **isn't it romantic:** A spirited production of Wendy Wasserstein's sometimes painful but always witty comedy about a pair of female "best friends" at age twenty-eight, and especially about the trials of one of them, Janie Blumberg. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **little shop of horrors:** Based on Roger Corman's 1960 horror quickie about a man-eating plant, this exuberant, jokey musical is wholly free of camp. The score is by Alan Menken, and Howard Ashman directed and wrote the book and lyrics. Martin P. Robinson designed the menacing plant. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Sundays at 2 and 5.) . . . **oh! calcutta!:** A collection of short sketches that purport to give us a refreshing view of sex and do not. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 757-7164. Mondays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 9:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **the real thing:** A characteristically lively gavotte by Tom Stoppard, though intellectually much less interesting than usual. The author appears to believe he is writing about love, but he is really writing about selfishness, which proves epidemic in the playwriting and acting community that he examines. Nicol Williamson and Laila Robins head the cast. Mike Nichols is the director. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **sunday in the park with george:** Harry Groener and Maryann Plunkett as Georges Seurat and his model/mistress, as Seurat brings into existence his painting of Parisians taking the air on the island of La Grande Jatte. Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book and direction by James Lapine. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **the tap dance kid:** A charming, diligent cast can do little to bring life to this conventional examination of a black family's ambitions. The dancing is splendid. (Mins-

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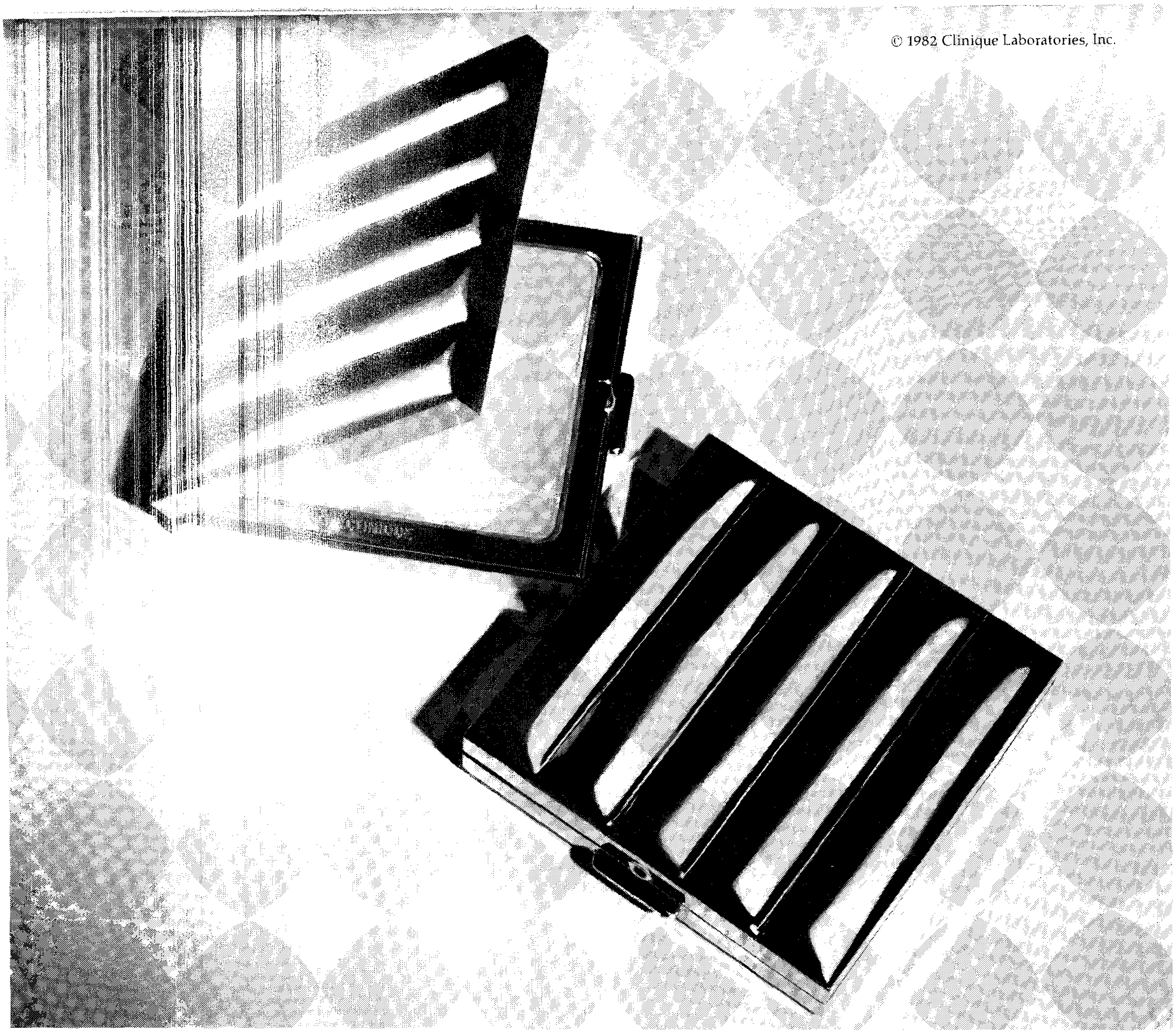

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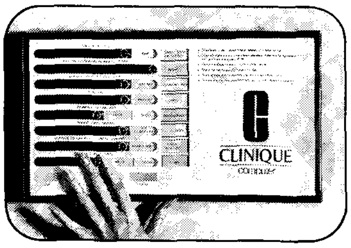

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koff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 869-0550. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **TORCH SONG TRILOGY:** Three plays—humorous, sad, sentimental, and witty—by and with Harvey Fierstein, who appears Tuesday through Friday evenings. Philip Astor replaces Mr. Fierstein Monday and Saturday evenings and at the matinée performances. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

MISCELLANY

The Circus—Tigers, elephants, horses, chimpanzees, and assorted canines are features of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's latest three-ring edition. (Madison Square Garden. 564-4400. Tuesdays at 10:30 and 2:30; Wednesdays and Fridays at 1:30 and 7:30; Thursdays at 10:30 and 7:30; Saturdays at 10:30, 2:30, and 7:30; and Sundays at 1 and 5:30. Through Sunday, June 2.)

A Tribute to Marc Blitzstein—Leonard Bernstein, Patti LuPone, Cris Groenendaal, and John Houseman will be among the participants in a program honoring the eightieth birthday of the composer. (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911. Sunday, April 28, at 8.)

"The Belle of Amherst"—Julie Harris in a single performance of the one-woman show about the life of Emily Dickinson, written by William Luce. A benefit for the American Center for Stanislavski Theatre Art. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. Monday, April 29, at 8. For information about tickets, call 382-0313.)

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Tentative schedule—Wednesday evening, April 24: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Pas de Deux," "Bugaku," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, April 25: "Square Dance," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Eight Lines," and "La Valse." . . . ¶ Friday evening, April 26: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Pas de Deux," "Fancy Free," and "Gounod Symphony." . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, April 27: "Valse-Fantaisie," "Tzigane," "Fancy Free," and "La Valse." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, April 27: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Bugaku," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Sunday matinée, April 28: "Square Dance," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Eight Lines," and "La Valse." . . . ¶ Sunday evening, April 28: "Valse-Fantaisie," "Tzigane," "Fancy Free," and "Gounod Symphony." . . . ¶ Tuesday evening, April 30: "Rossini Quartets," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Wednesday evening, May 1: "Rossini Quartets," "Fancy Free," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, May 2: "Bugaku," "La Valse," and "Firebird." . . . ¶ Friday evening, May 3: "Square Dance," "Fancy Free," and "Gounod Symphony." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, May 4: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Eight Easy Pieces," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Gounod Symphony." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 1 and Saturday, April 27, at 2. Through Sunday, June 23.)

American Ballet Theatre—Wednesday matinée and evening, April 24, and Thursday evening, April 25: "Romeo and Juliet." . . . ¶ Friday evening, April 26: "Donizetti Variations" (company première), "Duets," "The Little Ballet," and "Raymonda." . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, April 27: "Donizetti Variations" "Great Galloping Gottschalk," and "Raymonda." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, April 27: "Les Sylphides," "Field, Chair, and Mountain" (New York première), "Manon Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Monday evening, April 29: "Les Sylphides," "Airs," "Manon Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Tuesday evening, April 30: "Donizetti Variations," "Pas de Deux," "Anastasia," and "Great Galloping Gottschalk." . . . ¶ Wednesday matinée, May 1: "The Little Ballet," "Pas de Deux," "Field, Chair, and Mountain," and "Raymonda." . . . ¶ Wednesday evening, May 1: "Donizetti Variations," "Anastasia," and "Great Galloping Gottschalk." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, May 2: "Airs," "Anastasia," and "Raymonda." . . . ¶ Friday evening, May 3: "Les Sylphides," "Field, Chair, and Mountain," "Manon Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, May 4: "Donizetti Variations," "Airs," and "Raymonda." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, May 4: "Field, Chair, and Mountain," "Anastasia," "Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. *Evenings at 8. Matinées at 2.* Through Saturday, June 15.)

Paul Taylor Dance Company—Wednesday evening, April 24, and Tuesday evening, April 30: "Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)," "Equinox," and "Cloven Kingdom." . . . ¶ Thursday evening, April 25, and Wednesday evening, May 1: "Arden Court," "Snow White," "Profiles," and "Last Look." . . . ¶ Friday evening, April 26, and Saturday evening, May 4: "Aureole," "3 Epitaphs," ". . . Byzantium," and "Sunset." . . . ¶ Saturday evening, April 27, and Thursday evening, May 2: "Mercuric Tidings," "Lost, Found, and Lost," and "Dust." . . . ¶ Sunday matinée, April 28, and Friday evening, May 3: "Roses," "Runes," and "Esplanade." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 246-8989. Evenings at 8. Matinées at 3. Through Sunday, May 5.)

Feld Ballet—Wednesday, April 24, at 8: "The Envelope," "Caught," "Over the Pavement," and "Straw Hearts." . . . ¶ Thursday, April 25, at 7:30: A benefit program, with guest performer Peter Allen; for tickets, call 777-7710. . . . ¶ Friday, April 26, at 8: "The Grand Canon," "Adieu," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Saturday, April 27, at 8: "The Real McCoy," "Summer's Lease," and "Straw Hearts." . . . ¶ Sunday, April 28, at 2: "La Vida," "Danzon Cubano," "Adieu," and "Against the Sky." . . . ¶ Sunday, April 28, at 7:30: "Intermezzo No. 2," "Over the Pavement," and "Straw Hearts." . . . ¶ Monday, April 30, at 8: "The Real McCoy," "Summer's Lease," and "Straw Hearts." . . . ¶ Wednesday, May 1, at 8: "Play Bach," "Adieu," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Thursday, May 2, at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Impromptu," "Intermezzo No. 1," and "Against the Sky." . . . ¶ Friday, May 3, at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Intermezzo No. 2," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Saturday, May 4, at 8: "The Real McCoy," "Impromptu," "Summer's Lease," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. *Through Sunday, May 12.*)

Pilar Rioja—Final performances of the engagement. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Wednesday through Saturday, April 24-27, at 8, and Sunday, April 28, at 3.)

Calck Hook Dance Theatre—Presenting "2TENTS" and "Goodfellow's Dilemma." (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. Thursday and Friday, April 25-26, at 8; Saturday, April 27, at 8 and midnight; and Sunday, April 28, at 8. For tickets, call 279-4200.)

NIGHT LIFE

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**STEVE ROSS** has returned to sing and play the piano in the Oak Room. Music Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Buck Buchholz presides over the Rose Room keyboard Sundays from five-thirty to eleven. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—**BLOSSOM DEARIE** drops by this club to sing in her small, delicate, uncomplicated, diction-perfect voice. Early-evening concerts Wednesdays through Saturdays at six-thirty.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A dark, large, carpeted club with deep-blue tablecloths and a curvy bar. Singer-lyricist **JON HENDRICKS** is here with his singing family through Sunday, April 28. Sets begin after nine. And saxophonist **MONTY WATERS** leads after-hours (way past two in the morning) jam sessions every night but Monday. *Dining.*

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—**TOWER OF POWER,** the Bay-area soul orchestra, is onstage through Sunday, April 28, and Monday, April 29, will belong to rock poet Jim Carroll. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

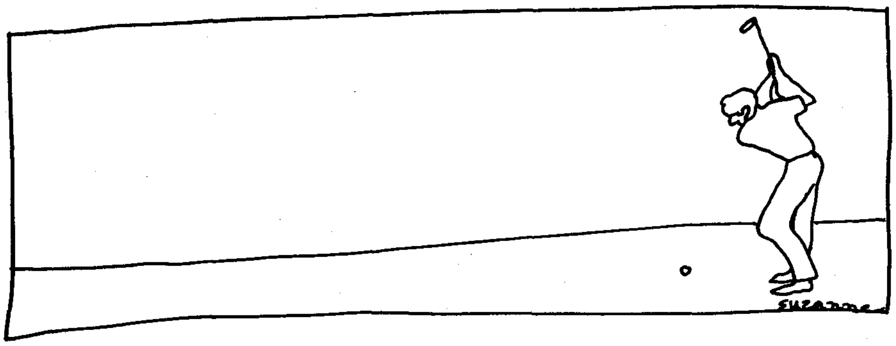
Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A sophisticated New York bar; it has dark wood panelling, driven conversationalists, and, right now, some very good piano-bass teams. **KIRK LIGHTSEY** works with a bassist through Saturday, April 27, and on Monday, April 29, **RAY BRYANT** and **JIMMY ROWSER** will come in. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—Singer and pianist **BOBBY SHORT,** who manages wonderfully to be sophisticated and enthusiastic at the same time, is back in the Café Carlyle with his sidekicks, bassist **BEVERLY PEER** and drummer **ROBBIE SCOTT.** Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at ten and midnight. Sundays and Mondays from nine to one, **VINCE GIORDANO** & the Nighthawks provide dance music. Dining. . . . **BARBARA CARROLL** sings at the piano over in the Bemelmans Bar. Her sets get going at ten Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Exposed rafters, weathered, splintery wood posts, decrepit neon beer signs, and a general ramshackle feel. All this and rock and roll, too. Monday is showcase night. Shows nightly from long after nine-thirty.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—Plaid-flannel-shirt heaven. The old-time, string-band, bluegrass, and Irish music: Wednesday, April 24, Seamus Egan and Jerry O'Sullivan; Saturday, April 27, **SKYLINE,** with banjoist **TONY TRISCHKA;** Wednesday, May 1, Joe Heaney and Father Charlie Coen; and Saturday, May 4, another fine banjoist, **BILL KEITH.** There is Irish music on Mondays and Fridays. Music from eight on Wednesdays and Thursdays and from nine Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

Edwardian Room, in the Plaza Hotel, Fifth Ave. at 59th St. (759-3000)—**BUCKY PIZZARELLI,** who



Great Performances

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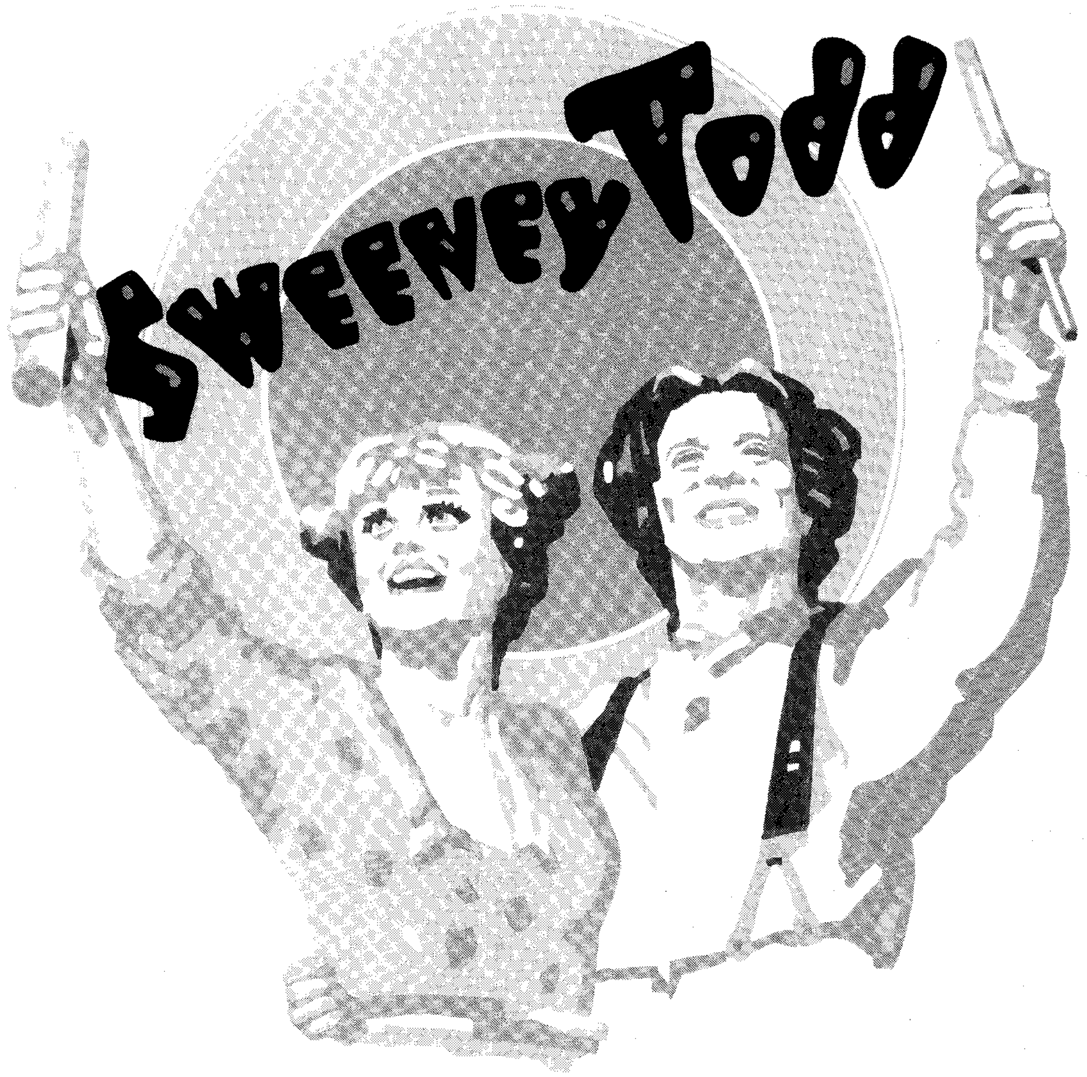

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

occasionally lets loose with hot-chord solos on his resonant seven-string guitar, guides a trio Fridays and Saturdays from ten-thirty until one-thirty. Dining and dancing.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—A velvet-and-mirror-walled belowstairs jazz stars' room where you can hear keyboardist and singer **LES MC CANN** and his group through Sunday, April 28, and starting Tuesday, April 30, singer **PHYLLIS HYMAN.** Mondays are the property of guitarist **LES PAUL'S** trio. Sets begin after nine. Dining.

Folk City, 130 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (254-8449)—The schedule: Wednesday, April 24, the Vipers and the Cucumbers; Thursday, April 25, Jim Post and Kenny Young; Friday, April 26, the **PERSUASIONS;** Sunday, April 28, Talitha Nelson, Billy Marlowe, Kevin Ward, BVM, and Dennis Dougherty; and Tuesday, April 30, **CHRISTINE LAVIN,** Buskin & Batteau, Hilly, Lilly & Lulu, Andy Breckman, Palmer & Bragg, and Erik Frandsen. Sundays are comedy nights, and Mondays are hootenanny nights. Shows usually begin at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty.

Hanratty's, 1754 Second Ave., at 91st St. (289-3200)—The East Side twin—it's actually a little fancier—of a West Side hangout. **JUDY CARMICHAEL,** a stride and ragtime pianist, is here Tuesdays through Saturdays. Pianist Jane Jarvis, who has played "Let's Go, Mets" about as many times as Ahmad Jamal has played "Poinciana" (she used to be the Shea Stadium organist), works on Sundays, and **DICK HYMAN** is in charge of the keyboard on Mondays. Music Sundays through Thursdays from eight-thirty, and Fridays and Saturdays from nine. Dining.

Knickerbocker Saloon, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A nice room that has resumed its piano-bass policies: **JOHN BUNCH** and **PHIL FLANIGAN** work together through Saturday, April 27, and starting Tuesday, April 30, **FRED HERSCH** and **MARC JOHNSON** will take over. Music from nine-thirty. Dining.

Lone Star Café, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—No, this isn't the Department of Rockabilly at the New School. It's a degentrified Schrafft's where the authentic Texas ambience is more representative of Austin than of Dallas. The partial lineup: Wednesday, April 24, New Orleans pianist **DR. JOHN;** Thursday, April 25, singer Delbert McClinton and **JUMP STREET,** a fine ten-piece R. & B. band; Monday, April 29, **ROGER MC GUINN;** Tuesday, April 30, bassist **JACO PASTORIUS** and the Robert Cray Blues Band; and Thursday, May 2, the soul band **WHO IT IS** and blues guitarist **JOHNNY COPELAND** and his outfit. Music from about eight-thirty nightly. Dining.

Lush Life, 184 Thompson St., at Bleecker St. (228-3788)—A nice, comfortable, unpretentious jazz club. Singer, pianist, and songwriter **MOSE ALLISON,** the simultaneously rural and urbane Mississippian, performs through Saturday, April 27, and on Tuesday, April 30, altoist **PHIL WOODS** will bring in his quintet. On Sunday and Monday, April 28-29, the Duke Ellington Society's salute to the Duke continues. Sets begin at eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and at nine on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Mikell's, 760 Columbus Ave., at 97th St. (864-8832)—A longtime music hangout on the upper West Side. Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, will be given over to pianist **MC COY TYNER.** Music from about ten. Dining.

Ritz, 119 E. 11th St. (254-2800)—The mostly rock-and-roll roster: Wednesday, April 24, the Bus Boys; Thursday, April 25, John Parr and Broken Arrow; Friday, April 26, singer **JOAN ARMATRADING;** Saturday, April 27, Play Group and Book of Love; Monday, April 29, Angel City; Wednesday, May 1, reggae-ist **PABLO MOSES;** Thursday, May 2, bassist **JAMAALADEEN TACUMA** and the Pe-dant-iks; Friday, May 3, Sussman Lawrence and the Mosquitoes; and Saturday, May 4, Urban Blight and Three Colors. Shows usually begin after eleven. Dancing.

Seventh Avenue South, 21 Seventh Ave. S., at Leroy St. (242-4694)—The jazz, jazz-rock, and R. & B. schedule: Wednesday, April 24, pianist **ARMEN DONELIAN;** Thursday, April 25, Richie Morales & Friends; Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, guitarist **HIRAM BULLOCK;** Tuesday and Wednesday, April 30-May 1, trumpeter **SHUNZO ONO;** Thursday, May 2, saxophonist **BILL EVANS;** and Friday and Saturday, May 3-4, saxophonist **BOB BERG.** Music from nine-thirty.

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Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great place to listen to mostly Brazilian music—Brazilian-jazz groups, samba bands, and all-percussion ensembles that perform *carnaval* music—and it tends to be swirling, heady, wonderful stuff. On its busy weekends, the club feels like the rush hour in Rio. Wednesday and Thursday, April 24-25, wailing Argentine tenor saxophonist **GATO BARBIERI;** Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, reggae poet **LINTON KWESI JOHNSON;** and Sunday, April 28, Tiberio Nascimento. Music from ten. Dining. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

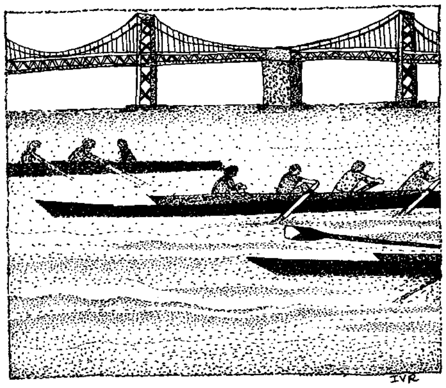
Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—This knotty-pine night club keeps bringing in proven jazz players, and the place keeps on being crowded. Tenor saxophonist **CHICO FREEMAN** heads up a quartet through Sunday, April 28, and starting Tuesday, April 30, the **SUN RA OMNIVERSE JET SET ARKESTRA** will find its orbit.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—In the big downstairs room, there's salsa after nine on Mondays: on April 29, **TITO PUENTE'S** orchestra, **RAY BARRETTO'S** orchestra, and **CARLOS (PATATO) VALDEZ,** the guest percussionist, will all be on hand—wow! . . . ¶ Meanwhile, out on the Terrace, **MICHAEL ABENE** and **MICHAEL MOORE** perform piano-bass duets every night but Monday. Jazz harpist **DAPHNE HELLMAN** is also present on Tuesdays. Music from nine-thirty.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Perhaps the most famous basement in the world, now fifty years old, has been described by Max Gordon, the wise proprietor and resident father figure, as "a good joint that people like to come to—thank God." Tenor-sax wiz **JOE HENDERSON** guides a sextet through Sunday, April 28, and on Tuesday, April 30, vibraharpist **BOBBY HUTCHERSON** will descend the stairs with his quartet. Mondays are **MEL LEWIS BIG BAND** Blast-Off Nights. Music from ten.

West End, 2911 Broadway, at 113th St. (666-8750)—Past the steam tables of piping-hot student food, beyond the pinball machines is a room full of swing music, Latin jazz, and hard bop. Trumpeter **BILL BERRY** performs through Sunday, April 28, and Monday, April 29, will be claimed by trumpeter **VALERY PONOMAREV.** Music from about nine.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A speakeasy in the twenties, Reno Sweeney in the seventies, this ground-floor town-house space is now a SoHo-sleek and spacious bar and restaurant with a musical passageway between them. The musicians: pianist **BILL MAYS** and bassist Mike Formanek through Saturday April 27; pianist **ARMEN DONELIAN** and bassist Dean Johnson beginning Tuesday, April 30; guitarist **GENE BERTONCINI** and bassist **MICHAEL MOORE** on Sundays; and pianist Jim Roberts and bassist Brian Torff on Mondays. Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.



JAZZ / FOLK / ROCK CONCERTS, PERSONAL APPEARANCES, ETC.

Willie Nelson and Family—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 246-4600. Wednesday through Saturday, April 24-27, at 8, and Sunday, April 28, at 3 and 8.

Johnny Winter—With the Edgar Winter band. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 874-1717. Friday, April 26, at 8.)

Earl Klugh—Beacon Theatre. Saturday, April 27, at 8 and 11:30.

Los Jaivas—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Saturday, April 27, at 8.

Jamaaladeen Tacuma—Carnegie Recital Hall. 247-7800. Saturday, April 27, at 8:30.

The Firm—Madison Square Garden. 564-4400. Monday, April 29, at 8.

ART

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Jacobo Borges—Figurative drawings and works on paper. Through May 18. (CDS Gallery, 13 E. 75th St. Open Mondays.)

Judy Chicago—Miss Chicago enlisted a sewing circle of a hundred and fifty to carry out her needlework designs based on childbirth themes. There are twenty-five of them here. Through Saturday, April 27. (ACA, 21 E. 67th St.)

Antoni Clavé—Paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints by an abstractionist. Through May 31. (Silberberg, 16 E. 79th St. Open Mondays.)

Victor Elmaleh—Recent paintings. Through Saturday, May 4. (Staempfli, 47 E. 77th St.)

James Guy (1910-83) **and Louis Schanker** (1903-81)—Paintings, drawings, and lithographs from the thirties and forties by two American modernists. Through May 18. (Diamond, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Le Corbusier (1887-1965)—Architectural drawings for various projects. Through May 18. (Prakapas, 19 E. 71st St. Opens at noon.)

Abby Leigh—Highly stylized oils of figures and landscapes. Through May 18. (A. M. Adler, 21 E. 67th St.)

David Levine—Watercolors of Coney Island (on and off the boardwalk) and portraits, including caricatures. Through May 10. (Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Albert Marquet (1875-1947)—A large retrospective of paintings and drawings. Through May 17. (Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

Henri Matisse (1869-1954)—A two-gallery exhibit that coincides with the large show of drawings at the Modern. Drawings in ink, pencil, and charcoal at Davidson, 43 E. 78th St.; and prints next door at Isselbacher, 41 E. 78th St. Through May 18.

Joan Mitchell—Abstract paintings from the sixties. Through Saturday, May 4. (Fourcade, 36 E. 75th St.)

Paul Resika—Two shows. Land- and seascapes in oil, mostly of Cape Cod. Also, related drawings. Through May 18. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.) . . . ¶ A survey of paintings from 1959 through 1984. Through May 19. (Artists' Choice, 394 West Broadway. Open Sundays.)

Susan Rothenberg—The artist has added splashes of color—yellows, reds—in her new canvases. Through May 18. (Willard, 29 E. 72nd St.)

Theodoros Stamos—Paintings from the mid-forties to the early sixties. Through May 25. (Ericson, 23 E. 74th St.)

Sally Vagliano—Paintings on panels, and trompe-l'oeil paintings of panels. Through Saturday, May 4. (Sachs, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Isaac Witkin—Open-form bronze sculptures, many chemically patinated in shades of blue and rose. Through May 18. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Albert York—Small, unpretentious canvases in which the uncommon painting skill of the artist transforms the commonplace quality of

"Diamonds are wild."

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"Corinthian" column candlesticks in sterling silver, 4½" high, each $350. Opera length
blue-gray cultured pearl necklace, $4,700. T-Clip fountain pen in sterling silver with fourteen karat gold nib, $100.
Aquamarine ring with diamonds set in platinum, $23,000. Subject to prior sale.
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Tiffany Money, redeemable for its designated worth in Tiffany merchandise.

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his subjects—a cow, a tree, a dog, and an occasional figure. Through Saturday, April 27. (Davis & Langdale, 746 Madison Ave., at 65th St.)

Group Shows—At the **colnaghi**, 26 E. 80th St.: Drawings by French artists from 1760-1880, including works by Girodet, Isabey, and Corot. Through May 23. (Open Mondays.) . . . **hirschl & adler**, 21 E. 70th St.: A large exhibition devoted to the period in the history of American architecture and decorative arts which ran roughly from 1875 to 1920 and was exemplified by Karl Bitter's figure for the Plaza fountain (represented by a plaster maquette) and two transom windows designed by John La Farge. Through May 31.

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Kenneth Callahan—Abstract oil paintings, plus ink-and-wash landscape drawings. Through Saturday, April 27. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Richard Carboni—Abstract constructions incorporating strips of wood, lengths of cord, and thickly laid-on paint. Through Saturday, April 27. (Getler-Pall-Saper, 50 W. 57th St.)

Elizabeth de Cuevas—Preparatory drawings and models for sculptures based on Egyptian, Mayan, and Indian motifs. Through Saturday, May 4. (Iolas-Jackson, 52 E. 57th St.)

David Dewey—Lighthouses, bungalows, and churches by a watercolorist who is following in Hopper's footsteps. Through Tuesday, April 30. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Martha Diamond—Broadly executed sky-blue paintings of high rises under construction. Through Saturday, April 27. (Alexander, 20 W. 57th St.)

Carroll Dunham—This artist paints on wood veneers, using the grain and knotholes as take-off points for both abstract and representational images. Through Saturday, April 27. (Baskerville + Watson, 24 W. 57th St.)

Yrjö Edelmann—Trompe-l'oeil paintings of bits of paper. Through May 11. (Heidenberg, 50 W. 57th St.)

Maurice Freedman (1904-85)—Landscapes and seascapes, most done in the last ten years of the artist's life. Through Saturday, May 4. (Midtown, 11 E. 57th St.)

Philip Guston (1913-80)—Paintings of single subjects—a shoe, a fist, a hooded figure. Through Saturday, May 4. (McKee, 41 E. 57th St.)

Valerie Jaudon—Strong new paintings in which the orderly patterns of interlocking arches usually associated with this artist are broken by unruly components that pull away from the main design and go off on their own. Also, related drawings. Through Saturday, May 4. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Robert Jordan—Representational landscapes. Through May 11. (French, 41 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Anselm Kiefer—Big, rough, sombre works based on the story of Exodus and done in a variety of mediums, including puddles of lead. Through May 11. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Chuta Kimura—Airy, colorful semi-abstract landscapes enlivened with occasional sketches of, say, a tennis match or a table and chairs, by a Japanese artist who moved to France thirty years ago. Through Saturday, April 27. (Siegel, 24 W. 57th St.)

Morris Louis (1912-62)—Drawings. Through Saturday, April 27. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Alice Trumbull Mason (1904-71)—Two shows of works by an American abstractionist: Woodcuts and soft-ground etchings at Washburn, 42 E. 57th St.; and oils at the downtown branch, 113 Greene St. Through Saturday, April 27.

Elie Nadelman (1882-1946) / **John Batho**—Drawings made in the summer of 1921. Through Saturday, May 4. / Photographs of Monet's garden at Giverny. Through May 11. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.) . . . ¶ The French Embassy, 972 Fifth Ave., at 78th St., has an exhibit of thirty-seven Batho color prints from the past ten years. Through May 31. (Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

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Giancarlo Neri—Color-field paintings and charcoal drawings. Through May 17. (Kornblee, 20 W. 57th St.)

George Nick—Landscape paintings of Jerusalem and suburban Boston. Through May 9. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

Betty Parsons (1900-82)—A retrospective of driftwood sculptures, as well as watercolors, gouaches, and other works on paper, including a kite with an airplane painted on it. Through Saturday, May 4. (Armstrong, 50 W. 57th St.)

Pedro Perez—Recent paintings and drawings, plus an installation. Through Saturday, April 27. (Pearl, 38 E. 57th St.)

David Reed / **Betty Woodman**—Colorful abstractions done on panels of various lengths. / Glazed earthenware vases. Through Saturday, April 27. (Protetch, 37 W. 57th St.)

Riopelle—Acrylic paintings and paper collages with images of flying geese. Through May 11. (Matisse, 41 E. 57th St.)

Mark Rothko (1903-70)—Black canvases and works on paper, the output of his last years. Through Saturday, April 27. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

John Seery—Expressionistic floral paintings. Through May 11. (Gruenebaum, 38 E. 57th St.)

Donald Sultan—New paintings. Through Saturday, April 27. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Harold Tovish—One-way mirrors and plastic spheres, the latter cracked to reveal a form within, are central to the five constructions here. Through Saturday, April 27. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Andy Warhol and Giorgio de Chirico—The question is: Should an artist repeat himself? De Chirico was criticized for it and Warhol comes to his defense with a spate of silk screens and drawings copying the Italian's work. The original de Chiricos are also shown. Through May 11. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

Group Shows—At the **galerie maeght lelong**, 9 W. 57th St.: Wolfgang Laib showing brass cones and bowls containing rice, and other pieces testifying to his Buddhist philosophy; Robert Ryman showing aluminum wall pieces; and Ian Wilson showing unpublished texts (he is a Conceptualist). Through June 1. (Open Mondays.) . . . **jacobson**, 50 W. 57th St.: Works on paper by contemporary British artists, including Frank Auerbach, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, and others less known on this side of the Atlantic. Through May 15.

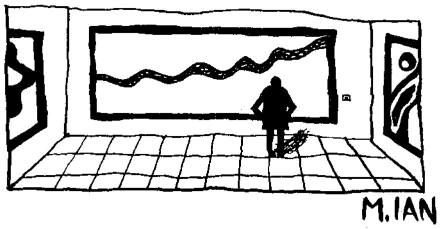
GALLERIES—SoHo

Shusaku Arakawa—Large maps, which look like city street guides, with directional arrows indicating some sort of esoteric flow. Through May 11. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.) . . . ¶ Related drawings. Starts Thursday, April 25. (Herstand, 24 W. 57th St.)

Jennifer Bartlett—Huge wall paintings of beach and sea, plus large models she used for them. Through Saturday, April 27. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Robert Beauchamp—Paintings completed this year and as long ago as 1959, by an Expressionist. Through May 18. (Knowlton, 153 Mercer St.)

Howard Ben Tré—Imposing decorative pillars of solid cast glass, plus a couple of garden benches of the same translucent material. Through Saturday, April 27. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)



James Biederman—Wall sculptures in wood, paintings with sculptures projecting out of them, and drawings. Through Saturday, April 27. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

Arnold Bittleman (1933-85)—A show of landscape and figure drawings. Unhappily, the exhibit has become a memorial to the artist, who died a week before it opened. Through May 8. (Milliken, 98 Prince St.)

François Boisrond—Bright-colored, stylized images of Paris and New York, often outlined in black on white canvas. Through May 9. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Paula Collery—Recent paintings and drawings, a step or two up from the naïve. Through Saturday, April 27. (Germans Van Eck, 420 West Broadway.)

Rosemary Cove—Glazed terra-cotta sculptures of women, flowers, and abstractions. Through May 11. (Ingber, 460 West Broadway.)

Jamie Dalglish—Cheerful abstract acrylics, some screened with polka dots and others laced with gold or silver glitter. Through Saturday, April 27. (Rentschler, 72 Greene St.)

Richard Estes—A dozen Photo-Realist paintings. Through Saturday, April 27. (Meisel, 141 Prince St.)

Gilbert and George—New hand-dyed photographic works in a show that will complement their retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum. Starts Saturday, April 27. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Robert Gordy—Large monotypes of heads, male and female, all of them verging on caricature. Through Wednesday, May 1. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

Penny Kaplan—Minimal welded-steel sculptures based on the Japanese kimono. Through May 15. (Soho 20, at 469 Broome St. Opens at noon.)

Joyce Kozloff / **Daisy Youngblood**—Watercolors of fanciful designs for subway stations. / Small clay sculptures. Through Saturday, May 4. (Gladstone, 152 Wooster St.)

Margaret Leveson—Recent landscapes in oil. Through Wednesday, May 1. (Blue Mountain, 121 Wooster St. Tuesdays through Fridays and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Thomas Nozkowski—Small abstractions in oil. Through Wednesday, May 1. (Esman, 70 Greene St.)

Anthony Polizzi—Paintings and wall sculptures, in designs and colors reminiscent of the Aztecs. First one-man show in New York. Through Saturday, May 4. (Littlejohn-Smith, 133 Greene St.)

Margot Robinson—Nonobjective paintings and drawings, and sculptures. Through May 12. (Noho, 168 Mercer St. Opens daily, except Mondays, at noon.)

Peter Saari / **John de Andrea**—Painted-plaster wall reliefs resembling ancient architectural fragments. / Life-size and utterly realistic polyvinyl sculptures of female nudes. Through Saturday, April 27. (O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway.)

Judith Shahn—Out-of-print silk screens, plus drawings and paintings. Through May 5. (Morningstar, 164 Mercer St. Tuesdays through Fridays, 3 to 6; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

Joyce Sills—Landscapes of the Northeast and Southwest, done in pastel, Prismacolor pencil, and gouache. Through May 9. (Eno, 164 Mercer St. Opens at noon Tuesdays through Saturdays, at 1 Sundays.)

Robert Stackhouse / **Ruth Hardinger**—Large watercolor studies for sculptures. Through Saturday, April 27. / Abstract sculptures in mixed mediums, finished with spray paint. Through Thursday, May 2. (Hutchinson, 138 Greene St.)

David True—Classical mythology and some of the artist's own mythology are behind some large new paintings involving satyrs, deer, and dogs, among other subjects. Also, outsize etchings. Through May 11. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

Alexander Luke Wallace—Representational landscapes, still-lifes, and street scenes. Through Wednesday, May 1. (Prince Street

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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Gallery, 121 Wooster St. Tuesdays through Fridays and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Group Shows—At **the drawing center,** 137 Greene St.: A hundred and twenty-eight drawings on loan from the Museo Correr, in Venice, which represent much of the work done in that city from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century. Through July 27. (Open Wednesday evenings until 8.) . . . **gibson,** 568 Broadway: Abstract paintings by John Armleder, Helmut Federle, Nancy Haynes, Olivier Mosset, Susan Smith, and Merrill Wagner. Through Wednesday, May 1.

OTHER GALLERIES

Darrel Austin—Paintings from 1940 through 1980. Through May 23. (Garet, 204 E. 10th St. Opens Sundays at 1.)

Mark di Suvero—Steel sculptures, completed in the past two years, which have swinging parts built into them; for example, the largest piece incorporates a swinging bed. Through June 29. (Oil & Steel, 157 Chambers St.)

Luis Frangella—Nipper the RCA dog and other subjects portrayed in paintings collaged with found objects (refrigerator parts, floor tiles). Through May 18. (Bromm, 90 West Broadway, at Chambers St.)

Paula Rego—Drawings and paintings of imaginary creatures by an uninhibited Portuguese-born English artist. Through Saturday, May 4. (Art Palace, 611 Broadway.)

Hunt Slonem—New oil paintings from the "All About Eden" series. Through June 1. (Braathen, 76 Duane St., between Broadway and Lafayette St. Opens at noon.)

Christopher Sproat—Large illuminated wood sculptures based on skeletal forms, and two wood benches with gold leaf. Through May 25. (Stoler, 13 White St.)

Group Shows—At the **alternative museum,** 17 White St., three blocks south of Canal St., at Sixth Ave.: The opening part of a two-part survey of paintings and sculptures by artists from the Southeast. Through Saturday, May 4. (Closed Tuesdays.) . . . **artists space,** 223 West Broadway: Donald Sultan has organized an exhibit of paintings by five young Spanish artists. Through May 11.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Eugène Atget (1857-1927)—Two shows in tandem, "Ancien Régime" (prints of Versailles, Saint-Cloud, and Sceaux) and "Modern Times" (working-class Paris), complete a survey of the photographer's work on display at the Museum of Modern Art. See below, under "Museums," for dates and times.

Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1969)—Experimental photographs, primarily. Through May 18. (Staley-Wise, 177 Prince St. Opens at noon.)

Ruth Orkin (1921-85) / **Edward Steichen** (1879-1973)—A memorial show of representative works by a photojournalist. / Twelve portraits—of Garbo, Valentino, and other notables—recently printed by George Tice from Steichen's original negatives. Through May 18. (Witkin, 41 E. 57th St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

Sam Wagstaff Collection—Mr. Wagstaff selected this show of nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs that were in his collection before it was bought by the J. Paul Getty Museum, and of a few photographs he recently acquired. Through June 9. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—A show of antiquities—crosses, chalices, crowns—from the Treasury of San Marco, Venice, many of which have resided there since their removal from Constantinople in the early thirteenth century. . . . ¶ A retrospective of sixty-three landscape paintings by George Inness. The Metropolitan is the first stop for this travelling exhibition, which was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. . . ¶ A hundred drawings, from the museum's permanent collection, by seventeenth-century Dutch masters; eighteen are by Rembrandt. All shows through June 9. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—A chronological arrangement of Matisse drawings, about a third of which are being shown in public for the first time. Through May 14. (Complementary shows are at Maxwell Davidson Gallery, 43 E. 78th St., and Isselbacher Gallery, 41 E. 78th St.) . . . ¶ Henri Rousseau's "Myself, Portrait-Landscape" greets viewers to a retrospective of approximately sixty of the artist's paintings. Through June 4. . . . **photography:** Last sections of the Atget survey. Through May 14. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A Gilbert and George retrospective of large photographic murals, in which the artists themselves appear. Starts Friday, April 26. A complementary show (starting Saturday, April 27) will be at Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. (The museum is open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 11 to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—The Whitney Biennial, 1985: eighty-four artists, a hundred and forty-six pieces (paintings, sculptures, photographs, films, video, and installations). Through June 2. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A show of drawings and paintings by nineteenth-century American Pre-Raphaelites, who practiced the doctrines of John Ruskin and the English movement, and whose subjects were nature scenes and humble still-lifes. Also included are works by better-known contemporaneous artists outside of but affected by the movement—Bierstadt, Church, Durand, and others. Through June 10. (Open daily except Tuesdays. Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—The ancient Mayan civilization will be recaptured and documented in an exhibit of objects (in gold, wood, jade, and shell), and maps and photographic blowups. Starts Friday, April 26. (Open daily. Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, 10 to 9; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—A show of paintings and drawings by German artist Felix Nussbaum (1904-44), many from the period when he lived in hiding during the Second World War. The artist died at Auschwitz. . . . ¶ A series of recent prints by Frank Stella, who based them on a series (also on exhibit) by El Lissitzky (1919), who based *his* prints on the children's Seder song "Had Gadya." Through June 9. (Open daily except Saturdays. Hours: Mondays through Thursdays, noon to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8; Fridays, 11 to 3; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Albrecht Dürer's original drawing "Praying Hands" is the centerpiece of a show of seventy-five Old Master drawings on loan from the Albertina collection in Vienna. As a bonus, the Morgan has added its own eight Dürers. Through May 26. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—The bicentennial of Audubon's birth is cause for celebration at the society, which owns and has mounted all four hundred and thirty-three remaining original watercolors for "Birds of America." (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5; Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A large show called "Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963-1973," which presents works in diverse mediums, primarily by black but also by anti-war and feminist artists, among them Benny Andrews, Rudolf Barnik, Romare Bearden, David Hammons, Gordon Parks, Betye Saar, and May Stevens. Also, a number of documentary photographs of civil-rights leaders and marchers. Through June 30. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

ART AFTER DARK

(Performance, music, dance, video, film, and combinations thereof.)

A.I.R. Gallery, 63 Crosby St. 966-0799.—"As It Stands," programs of performance art: Jerri Allyn, Thursdays, April 25 and May 2; Joe Lowery, Fridays, April 26 and May 3; Jerri Allyn, Bill Gordh, Joe Lowery, and Debra Wanner, Saturdays, April 27 and May 4—each night at 8.

The Kitchen, 59 Wooster St. 925-3615.—Elizabeth Streb (dance), Thursday through Sunday, April 25-28, at 8:30.

P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.—Individual works by four choreographers—Ann Carlson, Diane Martel, Susan Seizer, and, on film, Lucy Hemmendinger, Friday through Sunday, April 26-28, at 9; Sarah Brumgart (dance), Friday through Sunday, May 3-5, at 9.

MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949; for Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 427-4410; and for Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)

OPERA

Juilliard American Opera Center—Benefit performances of Handel's "Xerxes" (in English). Staged by Norman Ayrton, with the Juilliard Chamber Orchestra conducted by Albert Fuller. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Wednesday, April 24, and Friday, April 26, at 8, and Sunday, April 28, at 3. For information about tickets, call 874-7515, Wednesday through Friday, from 9:30 to 5:30.)

Opera Shop of the Vineyard Theatre—Final performances of Scarlatti's "La Griselda," conducted by James Kurtz and staged by Joseph LoSchiavo. (309 E. 26th St. 683-0696. Friday through Sunday, April 26-28, at 7:30.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting Verdi's "Alzira," as well as performances in English (by the same cast) of Voltaire's play "Alzire," on which the opera is based. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Saturdays at 7:30 and Sundays at 2:30.)

Bel Canto Opera—Victoria Bond conducting performances of Alberto Franchetti's "Germania," staged by Maroun Azouri. (Joan of Arc Junior High School, 154 W. 93rd St. Saturdays, April 27 and May 4, at 8, and Sundays, April 28 and May 5, at 2:30. Tickets at the door on the days of the performances.)

Handel Opera Festival—A performance of "Alessandro" in concert form is the last in a series of operas presented in honor of the composer's tercentennial. With Ashley Putnam and Gianna Rolandi, sopranos; Janice Taylor and Catherine Robbin, mezzo-sopranos; René Jacobs, countertenor; James Atherton, tenor; Donnie Ray Albert, bass; and Stephen Simon

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

conducting the Handel Festival Orchestra. (Carnegie Hall. Sunday, April 28, at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Zubin Mehta conducting—Thursday, April 25, at 8; Friday, April 26, at 2; Saturday, April 27, at 8; and Tuesday, April 30, at 7:30: A Sibelius-Crumb-Dvořák program, with Ida Haendel, violin. On April 30, Mozart's Symphony No. 41 will replace the Crumb work. . . . ¶ Thursday, May 2, at 8; Friday, May 3, at 2; Saturday, May 4, at 8; and Tuesday, May 7, at 7:30: A Haydn–Jacob Druckman–Dvořák program, with Lorne Munroe, cello.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall, a series of five concerts—Georg Solti directing a performance of Verdi's "Falstaff" in concert form on Monday, April 29 (with Katia Ricciarelli and Kathleen Battle, sopranos; Christa Ludwig and Ann Murray, mezzo-sopranos; Jerry Hadley, Heinz Zednik, and Francis Egerton, all tenors; Guillermo Sarabia and Wolfgang Brendel, baritones; Aage Haugland, bass; and the Chicago Symphony Chorus); a Shostakovich-Bruckner program on Tuesday, April 30; and a Brahms-Lutoslawski-Beethoven program on Wednesday, May 1. . . . ¶ Claudio Abbado conducting a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 7 on Friday, May 3; and a Berg-Tchaikovsky program on Saturday, May 4. (Evenings at 8.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Lukas Foss conducting—The fourth in a "Meet the Moderns" series of five programs, this one entitled "Narratives." With Kimball Wheeler and Isabelle Ganz, mezzo-sopranos; Robert Dick, bass flute; Robert Sherman, narrator; and others. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Thursday, April 25, at 8. . . . Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Friday, April 26, at 8. For information about tickets, call 254-6374.) . . . ¶ A Beethoven–Berio–Saint-Saëns program, with Alicia de Larrocha, piano. The final concerts of the regular season. (Brooklyn Academy of Music. Friday and Saturday, May 3-4, at 8, and Sunday, May 5, at 2.)

Mozartean Players Classical Period Orchestra—Steven Lubin conducting and playing the fortepiano, in an all-Mozart program. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum. Thursday, April 25, at 8.)

Manhattan Symphony—David Gilbert conducting. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, 120 Claremont Ave., at 122nd St. Friday, April 26, at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Y Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz conducting, with Jaime Laredo, violin, and Clamma Dale, soprano. (Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92nd Street Y. Saturday, April 27, at 8, and Sunday, April 28, at 3.)

Little Orchestra Society—Dino Anagnost conducting, with Siegfried Palm, cello, and Barbara Nissman, piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Monday, April 29, at 8.)

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directing the chorus and orchestra in a Mozart-Haydn program, with Judith Blegen, soprano; Shirley Love, mezzo-soprano; Frank Lopardo, tenor; and Malcolm Smith, bass. (Avery Fisher Hall. Friday, April 26, at 7:30.)

Clarion Concerts—Newell Jenkins directing a performance of Scarlatti's oratorio "Santa Teodosia," with Julianne Baird, soprano; Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano; Michael Brown, tenor; and Kevin Maynor, bass. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Thursday, May 2, at 8.)

New Calliope Singers—Peter Schubert directing. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Friday, May 3, at 8. For tickets, call 864-6765.)

RECITALS

Rita Bouboulidi—Two in a series of seven concerts presenting the Beethoven cycle of piano sonatas. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. Wednesdays, April 24 and May 1, at 8. For information about tickets, call 242-4770.)

Hildegard Behrens—Soprano. (Carnegie Hall. Thursday, April 25, at 8.)

Michala Petri—Recorder. (Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92nd Street Y. Thursday, April 25, at 8.)

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Andrew Violette—Piano, performing premières of two of his own works. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Thursday, April 25, at 8.)

"Echoes of the Shining Prince"—The première of this one-act concert opera by Seth Cooper, plus works by Richard Rodney Bennett, Debussy, Kengyo Yatsuhashi, and Mr. Cooper. With Donna Wade, soprano; Fusako Yoshida, koto; William Moersch, marimba; and others. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Thursday, April 25, at 8.)

Robert Thompson—Bassoon, with assisting artists, in a one-hour program. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Friday, April 26, at 6. For information about tickets, call 741-5689.)

Murray Perahia—Piano. (Carnegie Hall. Friday, April 26, at 8.)

Menahem Pressler and the Emerson String Quartet—Music for piano and string quartet. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum. Friday, April 26, at 8, the last in a series of concerts. . . . ¶ Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Saturday, May 4, at 8:30, and Sunday, May 5, at 2, two performances of a different program.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Jorge Bolet, piano; Kenneth Cooper, harpsichord; Robert Routch, horn; and members of the Society. (Alice Tully Hall. Friday, April 26, at 8, and Sunday, April 28, at 5.)

Composers String Quartet—A program of music by Haydn, Hindemith, and Debussy. (McMillin Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. Friday, April 26, at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Samuel Rhodes—Viola, in the last in a series of all-Hindemith concerts, this one with Lucy Shelton, soprano; Hiroko Yajima, violin; Joel Krosnick, cello; and Henry Schuman, oboe. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Saturday, April 27, at 2.)

Vera Tsu—Violin. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Saturday, April 27, at 5:30.)

Jeffrey Swann—Piano. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Saturday, April 27, at 8. For tickets, call 586-4680.)

Danielle Woerner—Soprano. (St. Michael's Church Recital Hall, 225 W. 99th St. Saturday, April 27, at 8. For information about tickets, call 222-2700.)

Ensemble for Early Music—A program of thirteenth-century music and dance. (Alice Tully Hall. Saturday, April 27, at 8.)

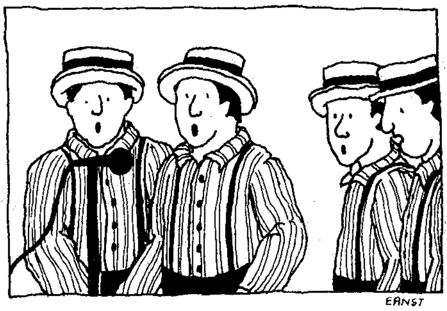
Chamber Music at BAM—Leon Kirchner conducting an ensemble and playing the piano, with Beverly Hoch, soprano, and Paula Robison, flute. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Saturday, April 27, at 8:30, and Sunday, April 28, at 2.)

Susan Quittmeyer—Mezzo-soprano. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Sunday, April 28, at 2.)

Andrei Gavrilov—Piano, in an all-Chopin program. (Carnegie Hall. Sunday, April 28, at 2:30.)

Alicia de Larrocha—Piano, in a Bach-Schumann program. (Avery Fisher Hall. Sunday, April 28, at 3.)

Donald Joyce—Organ, in an all-Bach program. (St. John the Evangelist, First Ave. at 55th St. Sunday, April 28, at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)



For the Love of Music—A program of music by Reisenstein, Mozart, and Brahms. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Sunday, April 28, at 3.)

National Association of Composers, U.S.A.—A program of music by Linda Bouchard, William Ortiz, James Perla, Bruce Saylor, Irwin Swack, and Judith Lang Zaimont. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Sunday, April 28, at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Janet Sullivan—Soprano, performing a program of poems set to music. (St. Joseph's Church, 371 Sixth Ave. Sunday, April 28, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Sarah Rothenberg—Piano. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Sunday, April 28, at 8.)

Young Uck Kim and Peter Serkin—The last two in a series of programs of Mozart sonatas for violin and piano. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum. Monday, April 29, and Thursday, May 2, at 8.)

Marc Ponthus—Piano. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Monday, April 29, at 8.)

New Music for Young Ensembles—The Alaria Chamber Ensemble, the Bell'Arte Trio, and the Kent State University Student Woodwind Quintet. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Monday, April 29, at 8.)

Joseph Smith—Piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Tuesday, April 30, at 8.)

Chamber Music at the Y—Jaime Laredo and Todd Phillips, violin; Kim Kashkashian and Ah Ling Neu, viola; Sharon Robinson, cello; Julius Levine, double bass; David Jolley and Stewart Rose, horn; and Michele Zukovsky, clarinet. (Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92nd Street Y. Tuesday and Wednesday, April 30-May 1, at 8.)

David Cullen—Classical guitarist. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Wednesday, May 1, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

American Brass Quintet—A program called "Masterpieces for Brass." (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Tuesday, April 30, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Verdehr Trio—A program of music from Vienna, with the Chamber Orchestra of William Paterson College conducted by Thomas Christian David. (Alice Tully Hall. Wednesday, May 1, at 8.)

Jeffrey Siegel—Piano. (Carnegie Hall. Thursday, May 2, at 8.)

Jean-Louis Steuerman—Piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Thursday, May 2, at 8.)

Josephine Mongiardo—Soprano, with Richard Taruskin, viola da gamba, and Kenneth Cooper, harpsichord and piano. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Thursday, May 2, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

League-ISCM—The Pro Arte Quartet in a program that includes the première of a work by Daniel Perlongo. The last in a series of concerts. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Thursday, May 2, at 8.)

Festival of Chant—Two programs at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine—Friday, May 3, at 7:30: A performance of traditional Buddhist ritual chants by Tibetan Gyuto Tantric Monks. . . . ¶ Saturday, May 4, at 7:30: Contemporary works inspired by traditional chants, performed by David Hykes and the Harmonic Choir, Pauline Oliveros, and Terry Riley. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. For tickets, call 977-9020.)

Yo-Yo Ma—Cello. (Avery Fisher Hall. Friday, May 3, at 8.)

Composers Concordance—A varied program honoring Otto Luening's eighty-fifth birthday. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Friday, May 3, at 8.)

George Foca-Rodi—Piano. (Alice Tully Hall. Saturday, May 4, at 3.)

José Ortiga—Piano. (Carnegie Recital Hall. Saturday, May 4, at 5:30.)

Mark Peskanov—Violin. (Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92nd Street Y. Saturday, May 4, at 8.)

Continuum—A program of music by Mario Davidovsky. (Alice Tully Hall. Saturday, May 4, at 8.)

Audubon Quartet—With Daniel Phillips, viola. (Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. Saturday, May 4, at 9.)

SPORTS

Baseball—**yankees** at Yankee Stadium: Vs. Boston, Wednesday and Thursday, April 24-25, at 8. . . . ¶ Kansas City, Friday, May 3, at 8, and Saturday, May 4, at 2. . . . **mets** at Shea Stadium: Vs. Pittsburgh, Friday, April 26, at 8:05, and Saturday and Sunday, April 27-28, at 1:35. . . . ¶ Houston, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 30-May 1, at 7:35.

Crew—Adams Cup Regatta: Harvard, Navy, and Pennsylvania. (Annapolis. Saturday, April 27.) . . . ¶ Carnegie Cup Regatta: Cornell and Princeton. (Princeton. Saturday, April 27.)

Racing—At **aqueduct:** Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1; through Monday, May 6. The Carter Handicap, Saturday, May 4. . . . **garden state park,** Cherry Hill, N.J.: Weeknights at 8; through Saturday, June 15. The Trenton Handicap, Saturday, April 27, and the Betsy Ross Handicap, Saturday, May 4. . . . **churchill downs,** Louisville, Ky.: The Kentucky Derby, Saturday, May 4.

Running—The Trevira Ten-Mile Twosome will start at ten-thirty on Saturday, April 27, in Central Park near the Tavern on the Green, and finish back at the same place.

Squash Racquets—Drakkar North American Open—Tournament matches, Friday, April 26, at noon and 6. . . . ¶ Quarterfinals, Saturday, April 27, at 10. . . . ¶ Semifinals, Saturday, April 27, at 6. . . . ¶ Finals, Sunday, April 28, at 2:30. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.)

Track—Penn Relays. (Philadelphia. Thursday through Saturday, April 25-27.)

ET ALIA

Poetry and Prose Readings—Jamaica Kincaid reading from her own prose. (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. Thursday, April 25, at 8. No tickets necessary; seating on a first-come, first-served basis.) . . . ¶ Bernard Malamud reading from his own short stories. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 427-4410. Monday, April 29, at 8.) . . . ¶ Molly Peacock reading from her own poetry and Matilde Daviú reading from her own short stories. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Monday, April 29, at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ John Rubinstein, Fritz Weaver, and Beatrice Straight reading from the short stories of John Updike, John Collier, Mary Robison, and Donald Barthelme. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Wednesday, May 1, at 6:30.)

Walking Tour—A conducted tour of Madison Square and Gramercy Park, sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York. Sunday, April 28, starting at the Little Church Around the Corner, 1 E. 29th St., at 1:30. (For information about tickets, call 534-1672.)

Auctions—At **sotheby's,** York Ave. at 72nd St. (Exhibition hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9:30 to 5; Sunday, April 28, from 1 to 5.) Wednesday, April 24, at 2: Books and manuscripts, from the library of the late Paul Francis Webster. . . . ¶ Wednesday, April 24, at 7, and Thursday, April 25, at 10:15: Paintings and drawings, from the estate of Florence J. Gould. Admission to the sales by ticket only; for information, call 606-7303. . . . ¶ Friday, April 26, at 2: Silver and gold objects. . . . ¶ Wednesday, May 1, at 2: Printed and manuscript Americana. Exhibition starts Friday, April 26. . . . ¶ Thursday, May 2, at 7, and Friday, May 3, at 10:15: Contemporary art. Admission to the Thursday sale by ticket only; for information, call 606-7303. Exhibition starts Saturday, April 27. . . . **christie's,** Park Ave. at 59th St. (Exhibition hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.) Wednesday, April 24, at 10:30 and 2: Jewelry. . . . ¶ Wednesday, May 1, at 7, and Thursday, May 2, at 2: Contemporary art. Admission to the Wednesday sale by ticket only; for information, call 546-1127. Exhibition starts Saturday, April 27.

Daylight Saving Time—Starts Sunday, April 28, at 2 A.M. Clocks should be turned ahead an hour.

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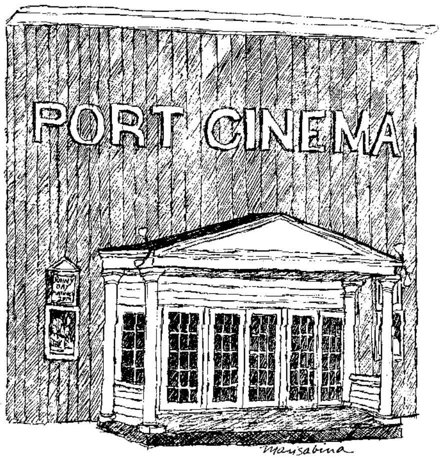

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 20.

EAST SIDE

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171; theatre opens in the late afternoon and is closed Mondays.)
"French Cancan" (†).

R.K.O. Century Art, 36 E. 8th. (473-7014)
"Lost in America" (†).

St. Marks Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 8th. (533-9292)
Through April 25: "Repo Man" (directed by Alex Cox), with Emilio Estevez and Harry Dean Stanton; and "Hard to Hold" (1984; Larry Peerce), with Rick Springfield.
From April 26: To be announced.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through April 25: "The Breakfast Club" (†).
From April 26: "Def-Con 4" (Paul Donovan).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through April 25: "Alamo Bay" (Louis Malle), with Ed Harris and Amy Madigan.
From April 26: "Just One of the Guys" (Lisa Gottlieb).

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (685-7652)
"The Purple Rose of Cairo" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Cat's Eye" (Lewis Teague), with Drew Barrymore and James Woods. From April 26: "Stick" (Burt Reynolds), with Reynolds, George Segal, and Candice Bergen.
Theatre 2: "Desperately Seeking Susan" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mask" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Cher, Eric Stoltz, and Sam Elliott.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Beverly Hills Cop" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Amadeus" (†).

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
"Ladyhawke" (Richard Donner), with Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Moving Violations" (Neal Israel).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Petit Con" (Gérard Lauzier; in French).

Manhattan I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Lost in America" (†).
Theatre 2: "Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment" (Jerry Paris), with Steve Guttenberg.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Lily in Love" (Karoly Makk), with Christopher Plummer and Maggie Smith.
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "King David" (Bruce Beresford), with Richard Gere. From April 26: "1918" (Ken Harrison).

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"The Sure Thing" (Rob Reiner), with John Cusack.

Cinema I and II, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022/0774)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "A Test of Love" (Gil Brealey; an Australian film). From April 26: "Micky and Nicky" (1976; Elaine May), with Peter Falk and John Cassavetes.
Theatre 2: "My First Wife" (Paul Cox), with Wendy Hughes and John Hargreaves.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Desperately Seeking Susan" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "The Company of Wolves" (Neil Jordan), with Angela Lansbury and David Warner. From April 26: "Just One of the Guys" (Lisa Gottlieb).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"The Purple Rose of Cairo" (†).

Loews New York Twin I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Alamo Bay" (Louis Malle), with Ed Harris and Amy Madigan.
Theatre 2: "Mask" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Cher, Eric Stoltz, and Sam Elliott.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"The Gods Must Be Crazy" (Jamie Uys).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Witness" (†).

U. A. 85th St. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Desperately Seeking Susan" (†).

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Cat's Eye" (Lewis Teague), with Drew Barrymore and James Woods. From April 26: "Stick" (Burt Reynolds), with Reynolds, George Segal, and Candice Bergen.
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "Nine Deaths of the Ninja" (Emmett Alston), with Sho Kosugi. From April 26: "Def-Con 4" (Paul Donovan).

86th St. East, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
"Ladyhawke" (Richard Donner), with Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, and Michelle Pfeiffer.

R.K.O. Century 86th St. Twin, Lexington at 86th. (289-8900)
Theatre 1: "Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment" (Jerry Paris), with Steve Guttenberg.
Theatre 2: "The Last Dragon" (Michael Schultz).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I and 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Theatre 1: "When the Raven Flies" (1984; directed by Hrafn Gunnlaugsson; in Icelandic).
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "The Illusionist" (Jos Stelling), with Freek De Jonge. From April 26: To be announced.

Vandam, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
"The Times of Harvey Milk" (Robert Epstein), a documentary.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "The Last Dragon" (Michael Schultz). From April 26: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "What Have I Done to Deserve This?" (Pedro Almodovar; in Spanish). From April 26: To be announced.

Greenwich Playhouse I and 2, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Killing Fields" (†).
Theatre 2: "Moving Violations" (Neal Israel).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Camila" (Maria Luisa Bemberg; an Argentine film, in Spanish).
Theatre 2: "The Company of Wolves" (Neil Jordan), with Angela Lansbury and David Warner.
Theatre 3: "Stranger Than Paradise" (†).
Theatre 4: Through April 25: "The Makioka Sisters" (†). From April 26: "Where's Picone?" (Nanni Loy; in Italian), with Giancarlo Giannini.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "A Passage to India" (†). From April 26: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "Alamo Bay" (Louis Malle), with Ed Harris and Amy Madigan. From April 26: To be announced.
Theatre 3: "Amadeus" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Amadeus" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (757-2715)
"A Passage to India" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through May 2: "Heartbreakers" (†).
From May 3: "Pumping Iron II: The Women" (George Butler).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
"A Private Function" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
Through April 25: "The Killing Fields" (†).
From April 26: "Bizet's Carmen" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Desperately Seeking Susan" (†).

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Camila" (Maria Luisa Bemberg; an Argentine film, in Spanish).
Theatre 2: "Amadeus" (†).
Theatre 3: "Jules and Jim" (†).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "The Purple Rose of Cairo" (†).
Theatre 2: "Streetwise" (Martin Bell), a documentary.

Embassy 72nd St. I and 2, B'way at 72nd. (724-6745)
Theatre 1: "My New Partner" (Claude Zidi; in French), with Philippe Noiret.
Theatre 2: Through May 2: "The Brother from Another Planet" (John Sayles), with Joe Morton, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Sayles. From May 3: "George Stevens: A Filmmaker's Journey" (George Stevens, Jr.), a documentary.

Loews 83rd Quad, B'way at 83rd. (877-3190)
Theatre 1: "Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment" (Jerry Paris), with Steve Guttenberg.
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "Cat's Eye" (Lewis Teague), with Drew Barrymore and James Woods. From April 26: "Def-Con 4" (Paul Donovan).
Theatre 3: "Moving Violations" (Neal Israel).
Theatre 4: "The Last Dragon" (Michael Schultz).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Lost in America" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mask" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Cher, Eric Stoltz, and Sam Elliott.
Theatre 3: "Ladyhawke" (Richard Donner), with Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, and Michelle Pfeiffer.
Theatre 4: Through April 25: "Alamo Bay" (Louis Malle), with Ed Harris and Amy Madigan. From April 26: "Stick" (Burt Reynolds), with Reynolds, George Segal, and Candice Bergen.
Theatre 5: "Witness" (†).
Theatre 6: "Desperately Seeking Susan" (†).

New Yorker I and 2, B'way at 88th. (580-7900)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "A Passage to India" (†). From April 26: To be announced.
Theatre 2: "Blood Simple" (†). From April 26: "Just One of the Guys" (Lisa Gottlieb).

Olympia Quad, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Cat's Eye" (Lewis Teague), with Drew Barrymore and James Woods. From April 26: "Stick" (Burt Reynolds), with Reynolds, George Segal, and Candice Bergen.
Theatre 2: Through May 2: "The Last Dragon" (Michael Schultz). From May 3: "Gotcha!" (Jeff Kanew), with Anthony Edwards.
Theatre 3: Through April 25: "The Sure Thing" (Rob Reiner), with John Cusack. From April 26: "Def-Con 4" (Paul Donovan).
Theatre 4: Through May 2: "The Company

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of Wolves" (Neil Jordan), with Angela Lansbury and David Warner. From May 3: "Code of Silence."

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION THEATRES, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment" (directed by Jerry Paris), with Steve Guttenberg.
Theatre 2: "Moving Violations" (Neal Israel).
Theatre 3: "Porky's Revenge" (James Komack), with Dan Monahan.
Theatre 4: Through April 25: "The Breakfast Club" (†). From April 26: "The Purple Rose of Cairo" (†).
Theatre 5: "Nine Deaths of the Ninja" (Emmett Alston), with Sho Kosugi.
Theatre 6: Through April 25: "The Falcon and the Snowman" (†). From April 26: "The Killing Fields" (†).

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (757-2408)
"The Care Bears Movie" (Arna Selznick), an animated film.

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, B'way at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: Through April 25: "Fraternity Vacation" (James Frawley). From April 26: "New Kids."
Theatre 3: "Beverly Hills Cop" (†).
Theatre 4: "Friday the 13th: A New Beginning" (Danny Steinmann).

LOEWS ASTOR PLAZA, B'way at 44th. (869-8340)
"Witness" (†).

LOEWS STATE 1 AND 2, B'way at 45th. (575-5060)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Mask" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Cher, Eric Stoltz, and Sam Elliott. From April 26: "Stick" (Burt Reynolds), with Reynolds, George Segal, and Candice Bergen.
Theatre 2: "Cat's Eye" (Lewis Teague), with Drew Barrymore and James Woods.

MOVIELAND, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)
Through April 25: "The Purple Rose of Cairo" (†).
From April 26: "Mask" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Cher, Eric Stoltz, and Sam Elliott.

NEW EMBASSY 49TH STREET, Seventh Ave. at 49th. (757-7003)
"Pinocchio" (1940), a Walt Disney full-length cartoon.

R.K.O. CENTURY NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "The Killing Fields" (†). From April 26: "Tomboy" (Herb Freed), with Betsy Russell.
Theatre 2: "Ladyhawke" (Richard Donner), with Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, and Michelle Pfeiffer.

R.K.O. CENTURY WARNER TWIN, B'way at 47th. (975-8369)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Return of the Jedi" (†). From April 26: "Def-Con 4" (Paul Donovan).
Theatre 2: "The Last Dragon" (Michael Schultz).

U. A. TWIN 1 AND 2, B'way at 49th. (247-1635)
Theatre 1: Through April 25: "Alamo Bay" (Louis Malle), with Ed Harris and Amy Madigan. From April 26: "Just One of the Guys" (Lisa Gottlieb).
Theatre 2: "The Company of Wolves" (Neil Jordan), with Angela Lansbury and David Warner.

REVIVAL HOUSES

AGEE ROOM, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560; on Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
"Enormous Changes at the Last Minute" (1983; directed by Ellen Hovde and Mirra Bank).

BLEECKER ST. CINEMA, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560; on Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Through April 25: "The Sure Thing" (1985; Rob Reiner), with John Cusack.
From April 26: To be announced.

CARNEGIE HALL CINEMA, 7th Ave. at 57th. (757-2131)
Through the afternoon of April 27: The final programs in a week-long series of Greek films.
From the evening of April 27: A week-long program of Israeli films.

CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)

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Through April 25: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972; Bernardo Bertolucci; in French and English), with Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider; and "A Man and a Woman" (1966; Claude Lelouch; in French), with Anouk Aimée and Jean-Louis Trintignant.
April 26-27: "Life of Brian" (1979; Terry Jones), with Graham Chapman; and "And Now for Something Completely Different" (1972), selected skits from the BBC-TV series "Monty Python's Flying Circus."
April 28-30: "The King of Comedy" (1983; Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro and Jerry Lewis; and "Stardust Memories" (†).
May 1-2: "Repulsion" (1965; Roman Polanski), with Catherine Deneuve, Ian Hendry, Yvonne Furneaux, and John Fraser; and "The Tenant" (1976; Roman Polanski), with Polanski.
May 3-4: "Silver City" (1985; Sophia Turkiewicz; an Australian film); and "Breaker Morant" (1980; Bruce Beresford; an Australian film), with Edward Woodward.

8TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Through April 25: "Stop Making Sense" (1984; Jonathan Demme), with the Talking Heads.
From April 26: To be announced.

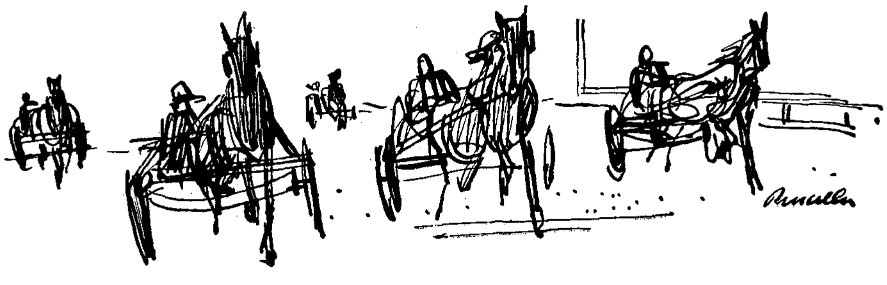
HOLLYWOOD TWIN CINEMA 1, 8th Ave. at 47th. (246-0717)
April 24: "Entre Nous" (1984; Diane Kurys; in French), with Isabelle Huppert and Miou-Miou; and "Le Bal" (1984; Ettore Scola).
April 25-27: "Caligula" (1980), with Malcolm McDowell.
April 28-29: "Fellini's Casanova" (1976; Federico Fellini), with Donald Sutherland; and "The Decameron" (1971; Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian), with Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, and Pasolini.
April 30-May 1: "The Family Game" (1984; Yoshimitsu Morita; in Japanese); and "The Ballad of Narayama" (1983; Shohei Imamura; in Japanese).
May 2-4: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951; Elia Kazan), with Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, and Kim Hunter; and "Sunset Boulevard" (1950; Billy Wilder), with Gloria Swanson, William Holden, and Erich von Stroheim.

HOLLYWOOD TWIN CINEMA 2, 8th Ave. at 47th. (246-0717)
Through April 25: "The Warriors" (1979; Walter Hill), with Michael Beck; and "Enter the Dragon" (1973; Robert Clouse), with Bruce Lee and John Saxon.
April 26-27: "Mrs. Soffel" (1984; Gillian Armstrong), with Diane Keaton, Mel Gibson, and Matthew Modine; and "Mass Appeal" (1984; Glenn Jordan), with Jack Lemmon, Zeljko Ivanek, and Charles Durning.
April 28: "The Bostonians" (1984; James Ivory), with Christopher Reeve and Vanessa Redgrave.
April 29-30: "The 4th Man" (1982; Paul Verhoeven; in Dutch), with Jeroen Krabbé and Renée Soutendijk; and "Spetters" (1981; Paul Verhoeven; in Dutch).
May 1-2: "All of Me" (1984; Carl Reiner), with Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin; and "The Woman in Red" (1984; Gene Wilder), with Wilder and Charles Grodin.
May 3-4: "Dune" (1984; David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan; and "Excalibur" (†).

METRO CINEMA, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
April 24: "Ohayo" (1958) and "Tokyo Story" (1953), both films in Japanese, directed by Yasujiro Ozu.
April 25: "Bizarre, Bizarre" (1937; Marcel Carné; in French), with Louis Jouvet, Françoise Rosay, Jean-Louis Barrault, Michel Simon, and Jean-Pierre Aumont; and "The Lower Depths" (1936; Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin and Louis Jouvet.
April 26-May 2: "Tokyo-Ga" (1985; Wim Wenders); and "Chambre 666" (1982; Wim Wenders).
May 3: "Risky Business" (1983; Paul Brickman), with Tom Cruise and Rebecca De Mornay; and "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" (1982; Amy Heckerling), with Sean Penn.
May 4: "Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands" (1978; Bruno Barreto; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese); and "Gabriela" (1984; Bruno Barreto; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese), with Sonia Braga and Marcello Mastroianni.

REGENCY, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
Through April 27: "The 39 Steps" (1935; Alfred Hitchcock), with Madeleine Carroll, Robert Donat, Godfrey Tearle, Peggy Ashcroft, and John Laurie; and "North by Northwest" (1959; Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason, Leo G. Carroll, and Martin Landau.
April 28-May 1: "The Music Man" (†).
May 2-4: "Hit the Deck" (1955; Roy Rowland), with Jane Powell, Tony Martin, Debbie Reynolds, and Walter Pidgeon; and "Jumbo" (1962; Charles Walters), with Doris Day, Stephen Boyd, and Jimmy Durante.

THALIA, B'way at 95th. (222-3370)
April 24: "The Last Picture Show" (1971; Peter Bogdanovich), with Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, and Cloris Leachman; and "Hud" (1963; Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Melvyn Douglas, Patricia Neal, and Brandon deWilde.
April 25: "The Golden Age of Second Avenue" (1969), a documentary; and "The Golem" (1920; a silent film).
April 26: "Eating Raoul" (1982; Paul Bartel), with Bartel, Mary Woronov, and Richard Beltran; and "The Little Shop of Horrors" (1960; Roger Corman), with Jonathan Haze and Jackie Joseph.
April 27: "Gallipoli" (1981; Peter Weir; an Australian film), with Mel Gibson, Mark Lee, and Bill Kerr; and "Walkabout" (1971; Nicolas Roeg; an Australian film).
April 28: "The Wages of Fear" (†); and "Diabolique" (1955; Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French), with Simone Signoret, Vera Clouzot, and Paul Meurisse.
April 29: "Winter Kills" (†); and "Success" (1982; William Richert), with Jeff Bridges, Bianca Jagger, and Ned Beatty.
April 30: "Joy of Living" (1938; Tay Garnett), with Irene Dunne and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; and "The Princess Comes Across" (1936; William K. Howard), with Carole Lombard and Fred MacMurray.
May 1: "Dance, Girl, Dance" (1940; Dorothy Arzner), with Maureen O'Hara and Louis Hayward; and "First Comes Courage" (1943; Dorothy Arzner), with Merle Oberon and Brian Aherne.
May 2: "Marjorie Morningstar" (1958; Irving Rapper), with Gene Kelly, Natalie



Wood, Claire Trevor, and Ed Wynn; and "Symphony of Six Million" (1935; Gregory La Cava), with Irene Dunne and Ricardo Cortez.

May 3: "The Wild One" (1954; Laslo Benedek), with Marlon Brando, Mary Murphy, and Lee Marvin; and "One-Eyed Jacks" (1961; Marlon Brando), with Brando, Karl Malden, and Katy Jurado.

May 4: "The Stunt Man" (†); and "My Favorite Year" (1982; Richard Benjamin), with Peter O'Toole, Mark Linn-Baker, and Joseph Bologna.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

April 24: "Down Argentine Way" (1940; Irving Cummings), with Betty Grable, Don Ameche, Charlotte Greenwood, and Carmen Miranda; and "The Gang's All Here" (1943; Busby Berkeley), with Alice Faye, James Ellison, and Carmen Miranda.

April 25: "I Wake Up Screaming" (1942; H. Bruce Humberstone), with Betty Grable and Victor Mature; and "Boomerang!" (1947; Elia Kazan), with Dana Andrews, Jane Wyatt, and Arthur Kennedy.

April 26-27: "The Trial" (1963; Orson Welles), with Anthony Perkins, Jeanne Moreau, Suzanne Flon, Elsa Martinelli, and Welles; and "The Third Man" (1950; Carol Reed), with Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, and Trevor Howard.

April 28: "And Then There Were None" (†) and "Dead of Night" (†).

April 29: "October" (†) and "Potemkin" (†).

April 30: "The Country Girl" (†); and "To Catch a Thief" (1955; Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Jessie Royce Landis, Charles Vanel, and Brigitte Auber.

May 1: "Laura" (†); and "Night and the City" (1950; Jules Dassin), with Richard Widmark and Gene Tierney.

May 2: "Sabrina" (1954; Billy Wilder), with Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn, and William Holden; and "Funny Face" (1957; Stanley Donen), with Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire, Kay Thompson, and Michel Auclair.

May 3-4: "Song of the Thin Man" (1947; Edward Buzzell), with Myrna Loy and William Powell; and "Another Thin Man" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490; a limited number of tickets are available to those applying for them in person at the museum after 11 on the day of the showing.)

THEATRE 1: April 25 at 2:30 and 6: "Variety" (1925; directed by E. A. Dupont; a German silent film, with English intertitles), with Emil Jannings and Lya de Putti. . . . ¶ April 26 at 2:30 and April 27 at 2: "The Young Mr. Pitt" (1942; Carol Reed), with Robert Donat, Robert Morley, Phyllis Calvert, and John Mills. . . . ¶ April 27 at 5: "The Way Ahead" (1944; Carol Reed), with David Niven, Stanley Holloway, Raymond Huntley, Peter Ustinov, Leo Genn, and Trevor Howard. . . . ¶ April 28 at 2: "South Riding" (1938; Victor Saville), with Ralph Richardson, Edna Best, Edmund Gwenn, and Ann Todd. . . . ¶ April 28 at 5: "This Happy Breed" (1944; David Lean), with Robert Newton, Celia Johnson, John Mills, Kay Walsh, and Stanley Holloway. . . . ¶ April 29 at 2:30: "South Riding." . . . ¶ April 30 at 2:30: "This Happy Breed." . . . ¶ April 30 at 6: "The Way Ahead." . . . ¶ May 3 at 2:30: "The Way to the Stars" (1945; Anthony Asquith), with Michael Redgrave, John Mills, Rosamund John, and Douglass Montgomery. . . . ¶ May 3 at 6: "In Which We Serve" (1942; Noël Coward and David Lean), with Coward, John Mills, Bernard Miles, and Celia Johnson. . . . ¶ May 4 at 2: "Holiday Camp" (1947; Ken Annakin), with Flora Robson, Dennis Price, and Jack Warner. . . . ¶ May 4 at 5: "The Guinea Pig" (1948; Roy Boulting), with Richard Attenborough, Sheila Sim, and Bernard Miles.

THEATRE 2: April 25 at 3 and 6:30: "The Great Weirton Steal" (1984; Catherine Pozzo di Borgo), a documentary. . . . ¶ April 26 at 3: "The Burning Earth" (1922; F. W. Murnau; a German silent film, with German intertitles), with Werner Krauss. . . . ¶ April 26 at 6:30 and April 27 at 2:30: "Nosferatu" (1922; F. W. Murnau; a German silent film, with German intertitles), with Max Schreck. . . . ¶ April 27 at 5:30: "The Burning Earth." . . . ¶ April 28 at 2:30: "Castle Vogelöd" (1921; F. W. Murnau; a German silent film, with German intertitles). . . . ¶ April 28 at 5:30: "Journey Into the Night" (1920; F. W. Murnau; a German silent film, with German intertitles.) . . . ¶ April 30 at 3: "Castle Vogelöd." . . . ¶ May 4 at 2:30: "Journey Into the Night." . . . ¶ May 4 at 5:30: "Phantom" (1922; F. W. Murnau; a German silent film, with German intertitles).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—A series of programs composed of films and video works made during the past two years. The schedule of performances is complicated; our best advice is to phone the museum for titles, schedules, and ticket information. Closed Mondays.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN THESE PAGES DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Amadeus—The lofty playwright Peter Shaffer has the minor composer Salieri (F. Murray Abraham) declaring war on Heaven for gypping him, and determined to ruin the incomparable Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Tom Hulce) because God's voice is speaking through him. The director, Miloš Forman, trudges through the movie as if every step were a major contribution to art, and he keeps the audience hooked. Some redeeming qualities: Mozart's music, Twyla Tharp's staging of the dances and opera excerpts, and Abraham's eager, slimy Salieri. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/29/84.) (Eastside Cinema, 23rd St. West Triplex, Guild, and Lincoln Plaza.)

And Then There Were None (1945)—The Agatha Christie murder mystery and play "Ten Little Indians" gathers together a group of characters and then ticks them off to the nursery rhyme. Ten people are invited to spend a weekend on an island by a host none of them knows; on arrival they are notified by phonograph that their host, in absentia, is going to punish them for various crimes they have committed, and they start keeling over like plague victims. This René Clair version never had much life in it to start with, despite the cast—Judith Anderson, Roland Young, Walter Huston, Mischa Auer, Barry Fitzgerald, Louis Hayward, and C. Aubrey Smith. The efforts at sprightly, stylish comedy don't gain much momentum. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 28.)

Another Thin Man (1939)—The third in the series, and without any new ideas except a bad one: still airily casual, Nick and Nora Charles (William Powell and Myrna Loy) are now the parents of a baby boy. The plot involves a weekend at the estate of an explosives manufacturer (C. Aubrey Smith) who expects Sheldon Leonard (looking very young and sleek) to kill him. The film is dispiriting, but a lot of amusingly familiar faces turn up, among them Otto Kruger, Ruth Hussey, Marjorie Main, and, of course, Asta. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; May 3-4.)

Beverly Hills Cop—The plot is just a peg for little set pieces in which the street-smart Eddie Murphy, in his worn-out sweatshirts, saunters through swank Beverly Hills locations, tells whopping lies, and outsmarts the white dumbos. Hotfooting the picture to keep it going, he rattles off pitifully undistinguished profanity, but we're cued to react to every stupid four-letter word as riotous. With Judge Reinhold, Stephen Elliott, Bronson Pinchot, Ronny Cox, Steven Berkoff, Lisa Eilbacher, and John Ashton. Directed by Martin Brest. (12/24/84) (34th St. East, and Embassy.)

Bizet's Carmen—Directed by Francesco Rosi, this version has a clean, raw vivacity and is supremely romantic. Julia Migenes-Johnson's Carmen revitalizes the sotry. Her strutting, her dark, messy frizzy hair—her sexual availability—attract the middle-class clod Don José (Plácido Domingo) and drive him crazy. Rosi lets the music carry the passion; what he supplies is ideal conditions for the viewer to experience the opera as a totality. Rosi's handling suggests the most fluently stylized movie musicals. With Faith Esham as Micaëla and Ruggero Raimondi as Escamillo. In French. (10/29/84) (Cinema 3; starting April 26.)

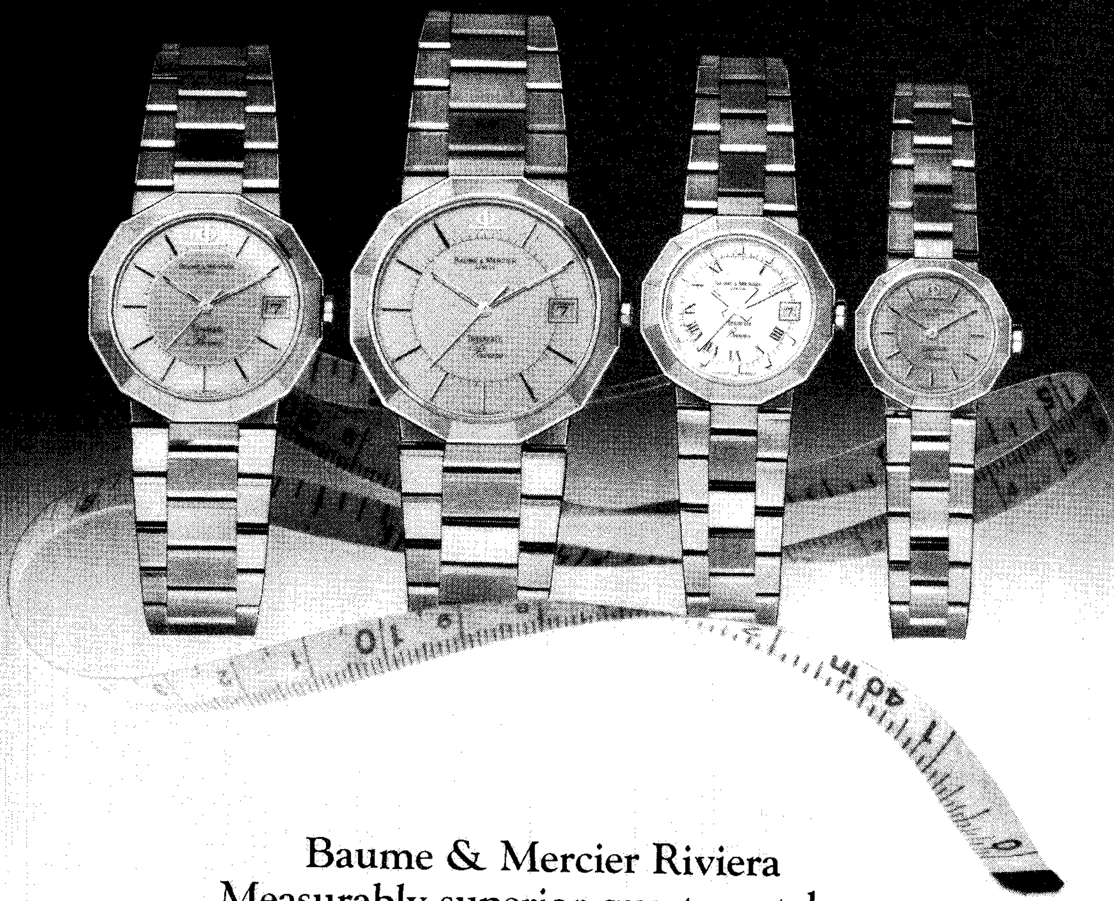
Blood Simple—A Texas roadhouse owner (Dan Hedaya) wants to have his young wife (Frances McDormand) and her lover (John Getz) murdered; he hires a killer, a good-ol'-boy private detective (M. Emmet Walsh) who takes his money and double-crosses him. The film provides a visually sophisticated form of gross-out humor; the material is thin, though, and there isn't enough suspense until about the last ten minutes, when the action is so grisly that it has a kick. Directed by Joel Coen, who wrote the screenplay with his brother Ethan. (2/25/85) (New Yorker; through April 25.)

The Breakfast Club—Set mostly in the library of a suburban Chicago high school, this encounter-session movie by the writer-director John Hughes is about five students—a cross-section of the student body—who in the course of serving a 7 A.M.-4 P.M. Saturday detention peel off their layers of self-protection, confess their problems with their parents, and are stripped down to their "true selves." With the exception of Ally Sheedy playing a shy, skittish weirdo, the movie is about a bunch of stereotypes who complain that other people see them as stereotypes. The film appeals to young audiences by blaming adults for the kids' misery and enshrining the kids' most banal longings to be accepted and liked. With Emilio Estevez, Molly Ringwald, Anthony Michael Hall, and Judd Nelson. (4/8/85) (Gramercy, and Criterion Theatres; through April 25.)

The Country Girl (1954)—This rather odd movie, derived from a Clifford Odets play, features the least broken-down of actors, Bing Crosby, as a broken-down actor—a weak-willed, alcoholic heel who lives on the strength of his wife, Grace Kelly. William Holden is the Broadway director who misinterprets the tangle of dependencies and tries to free the husband from the wife. Rather inexplicably, this sadomasochistic morass was one of the biggest box-office hits of its year, and, somewhat inexplicably also, Academy Awards were presented to Grace Kelly as Best Actress and to the director-writer, George Seaton, for his uneven and incoherent screenplay. The film has virtues, however—Holden's performance, good backstage dialogue, and Anthony Ross in a small role. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 30.)

Dead of Night (1945)—Michael Redgrave plays a schizophrenic ventriloquist tormented by his dummy, and his overpowering performance—a small work of art—lifts this five-part movie above the elegant, sophisticated entertainment it aspired to be. The stories in this English production are meant to accumulate in intensity, until the trap closes in the surreal climax—an encompassing ghost story. The film proceeds through these five episodes: Antony Baird and Miles Malleson in "Room for One More;" Sally Ann Howes in the murdered-child sequence (good material poorly done); Googie Withers and Ralph Michael in the story of the mirror that reflects the crime of an earlier century; Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne in the golfers' story (which is pretty awful); Michael Redgrave as the ventriloquist, with Hartley Power as his rival and Frederick Valk as the psychoanalyst; then the nightmarish summation. Directed by Robert Hamer (the mirror story), Basil Dearden, Charles Crichton, and Alberto Cavalcanti (the ventriloquist sequence). (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 28.)

Desperately Seeking Susan—Set in the punk world, it's a mistaken-identity fantasy about doe-eyed Roberta (Rosanna Arquette), a suburban housewife in New Jersey, who becomes fixated on a drifter named Susan (played by the rock star Madonna). This attempt at screwball charm was directed by Susan Seidelman, who wipes out her actors. All their responsiveness is cut off—there's nothing going on in them. No subtext—nothing. This flatness can make your jaw fall open, but it seems to be accepted by the audience as New Wave postmodernism. Nobody comes through except Madonna, who



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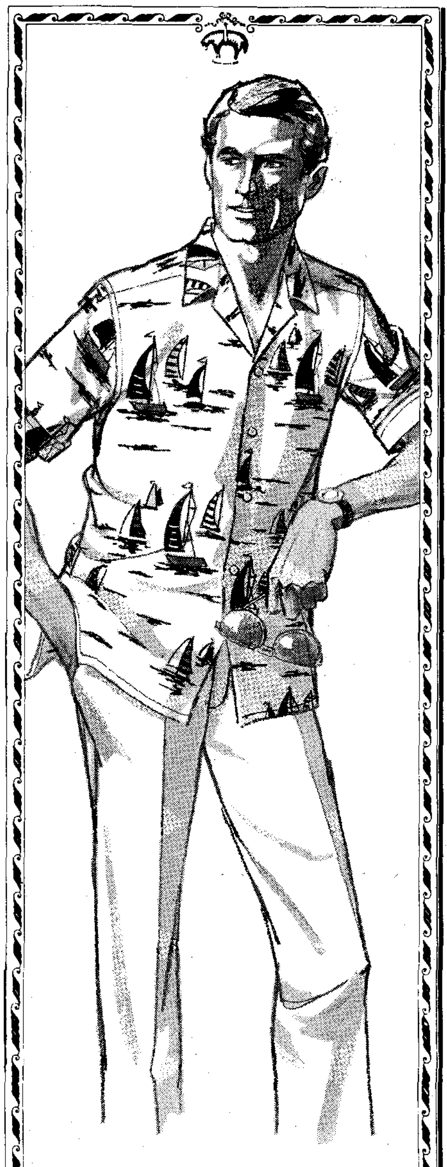

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comes through as Madonna (she moves regally, an indolent, trampy goddess), and the cinematographer Edward Lachman, whose lighting gives the East Village shops and streets a funky prettiness—like an Expressionist painting of neon squalor and lollipops. The transactions between the people on the screen are stupefying (and often in woozy slow-motion, like a rock video going poetic). How did this script (by Leora Barish) ever get produced? The cast includes Robert Joy, Aidan Quinn, Mark Blum, Laurie Metcalf, and the comedian Steven Wright; there are also glimpses of Richard Hell, Anne Carlisle, Richard Edson, John Lurie, Shirley Stoler, Rockets Red Glare (as a taxi-driver), and other "inside" celebrities. (4/22/85) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, U. A. 85th St. East, Loews Paramount, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Excalibur (1981)—John Boorman's retelling of the Arthurian legends is a serious, R-rated fairy tale. Boorman plunges into the Dark Ages, smiting us with raging battles, balls of flame, mists of dragon's breath, knights with horns and tusks jutting out of their armored heads, and battle-axes that hack off limbs, which seem to ricochet off the armor. The whole film is soaked in Jung, but it has its own crazy integrity. The imagery is impassioned and has a hypnotic quality. As Merlin, Nicol Williamson is the presiding spirit; he stands in for Jung, and he informs us of the meaning of what we're seeing. The film spans three generations—first Uther Pendragon and his feuding with the other Celtic lords, then his son Arthur's reign, with the Knights of the Round Table gathered at Camelot, and finally, the challenge to Arthur's power by *his* son, the demonic Mordred. The characters aren't scaled heroically enough for the myths built on their adventures, so we don't experience the elation that we have come to expect at the end of a heroic story, but the film gives us a different kind of elation. It's as if Boorman were guiding us down a magic corridor and kept parting the curtains in front of us. With Nigel Terry as Arthur, Paul Geoffrey as Perceval, Cherie Lunghi as hot little Guenevere, Helen Mirren as Morgana, and Nicholas Clay as Lancelot. (Hollywood Twin Cinema 2; May 3-4.)

The Falcon and the Snowman—The movie isn't really interested in why the intelligent Chris Boyce and his coked-up buddy, Daulton Lee, two boys from well-heeled, conservative Southern California backgrounds, sold key documents about U.S. surveillance satellites to the Russians. The director, John Schlesinger, wants to shock the hell out of us by justifying Boyce, making the point that his actions weren't the traitorous ones—the C.I.A.'s were. While Schlesinger gives you the feeling that he knows what he's doing, he has no staying power—he doesn't develop any of the ideas he tosses in. Timothy Hutton, who plays Boyce, makes you respond to the freak hidden inside the proper manners, but the attention shifts to Sean Penn's whiny, strung-out Daulton Lee—an attention-getting bummer of a performance. With David Suchet, Dorian Harewood, Lori Singer, Pat Hingle, Boris Leskin, and Joyce Van Patten. (2/11/85) (Criterion Theatres; through April 25.)

French Cancan (1954)—Jean Renoir's account of how an impresario (Jean Gabin) builds the Moulin Rouge and revives the long-forgotten cancan. The show-folk charm is rather cloying. With Maria Felix, Françoise Arnoul, and Edith Piaf. In French. (Little Theatre, Public Theatre.)

Heartbreakers—Set in L.A., this is about what's underneath the buddy relationship of the prosperous, darkly handsome Eli (Nick Mancuso), who takes over his father's business, and the tall, boyish Blue (Peter Coyote), a driven, unsuccessful painter, always broke. The writer-director Bobby Roth gets at the unresolved feelings that go into making them friends and rivals. Women—Carole Laure, Kathryn Harrold, and the late Carol Wayne—are their battlefield. The film is all moods and moments; Roth may not go deep enough, but his work has temperament. He succeeds in using the two men as a way into the American culture of sex, circa the mid-eighties. The picture becomes more involving as it goes on, and when it's over, you feel you've seen something (even if you're not quite sure what). With Max Gail, Jamie Rose, George Morfogen, and James Laurenson. Cinematography by Michael Ballhaus; music by Tangerine Dream. (4/22/85) (57th St. Playhouse; through May 2.)

Jules and Jim (1962)—François Truffaut's celebration of bohemian life in France and Germany in the years of artistic ferment between the First World War and the Second. The Austrian, Jules (Oskar Werner), and the Frenchman, Jim (Henri Serre), have a peaceful friendship. But when they are with Catherine (Jeanne Moreau), they feel alive; anything may happen. She's the catalyst, the troublemaker, the source of despair as well as the source of joy, an enchantress. Catherine marries Jules, who can't hold her, and, in despair, he encourages Jim's interest in her—"that way, she'll still be *ours*." She insists on her freedom to leave men, but if they leave her (as Jim does) she is as devastated and as helpless as any clinging vine (perhaps *more* devastated—she can't even ask for sympathy). Elliptical, full of wit and radiance, this is the best movie ever made about what most of us think of as the Scott Fitzgerald period. In French. (Lincoln Plaza.)

The Killing Fields—The British film shows us the Khmer Rouge transforming Cambodia into a nationwide gulag, and the scenes of this genocidal revolution have the breadth and terror of something deeply imagined. The movie tells the story of how Sydney Schanberg (Sam Waterston), who was the *Times* correspondent in Cambodia from 1972 to 1975, was separated from his interpreter and assistant, Pran (Haing S. Ngor), and of his remorse and general anguish until the wily, resourceful Pran, after four years of slave labor and hiding, made his way into Thailand, late in 1979, and got word to him. It's written like a TV docudrama, and it bogs down in the crosscutting between Pran's experiences of the atrocities in Cambodia and Schanberg's guilt and misery in various settings in the U.S. But it's by no means a negligible movie. Roland Joffé, making his début as a movie director, and the cinematographer, Chris Menges, give us imagery that suggests the work of a macabre lyric poet, and there are accomplished performances—most notably by John Malkovich, Bill Paterson, and Athol Fugard. (12/10/84) (Greenwich Playhouse.... ¶ Cinema 3, and R.K.O. Century National Twin; through April 25.... ¶ Criterion Theatres; starting April 26.)

Laura (1944)—Everybody's favorite chic murder mystery. Gene Tierney is the dead girl who ends up as the heroine; Clifton Webb and Vincent Price are her suitors; Dana Andrews is the charmingly necrophiliac detective; and Judith Anderson is modishly contemptible. (Speaking of Price, she says, "He's no good, but he's what I want. I'm not a nice person, neither is he.... We're both weak and can't seem to help it.") Produced and directed by Otto Preminger. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; May 1.)

Lost in America—Original and pleasantly snappy. It lacks the fullness of a major comedy, but Albert Brooks, who stars in it and directed, is on to something: satirizing the upper middle class from within, he shows the nagging terror along with the complacency. And he keeps you laughing fairly steadily. As David, an L.A. advertising whiz, he's an anxious wreck who tortures himself and his wife over every detail of his existence. With her little-girl breathiness and her look of panic, Julie Hagerty is an ideal choice for the timid, depressed woman who puts up with him. These two buy a luxury motor home, and, with the security of a nest egg of roughly a hundred and forty-five thousand dollars, set out to find themselves and get in touch with the real America. With Garry Marshall, Art Frankel, and Michael Greene. (4/8/85) (R.K.O. Century Art, Manhattan, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Makioka Sisters (1983)—Kon Ichikawa celebrates the delicate beauty of the four Makioka sisters—the four heiresses of an aristocratic Osaka family, who move as if always conscious that they must be visual poetry—and at the same time he makes you feel that there's something amusingly perverse in their poise and their politesse. Set in 1938, the film is like a succession of evanescent revelations—the images are stylized and formal, yet the quick cutting melts them away. The venerable Ichikawa is doing what so many younger directors have claimed to be

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doing: he's making visual music. And he's doing it without turning the actors into zombies, and without losing his sense of how corruption and beauty and humor are all rolled up together. In Japanese. (3/11/85) (Quad Cinema; through April 25.)

The Music Man (1962)—A cheerful, broad piece of Americana about a silver-tongued con man, who drifts into an Iowa town and persuades the gullible residents that the children need to organize a fine big marching band. The director, Morton DaCosta, isn't comfortable with the camera, and the material seems too literal, too practical, too set. But the star, Robert Preston, has a few minutes of fast patter—conmanship set to music—that constitute one of the high points in the history of American musicals. This is one of those triumphs that only a veteran performer can have; Preston's years of experience and his love of performing come together joyously. With Shirley Jones as the librarian who reforms the roué hero, and Paul Ford, Hermione Gingold, Buddy Hackett, Pert Kelton, and Ronny Howard. (Regency; April 28-May 1.)

October (1927; also called "Ten Days That Shook the World")—Eisenstein followed "Potemkin" (see below), with this epic celebrating the ten days in 1917 during which the Bolsheviks overthrew the Kerensky government. It continues his striking experimental methods—the violent juxtapositions, the use of visual symbols to communicate abstract ideas, and the concept of the masses as hero. The movie also occupies a niche in the history of political falsification: the Soviet government commissioned the film for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, but it was not shown. Trotsky was one of the main characters in Eisenstein's original version, and Trotsky at the time was organizing demonstrations against the Communist Party; Eisenstein had to spend five months reediting the work to dislodge Trotsky from his place in the making of the Revolution. Even this edited version was later banned, as "formalist." Maybe because of the pressures Eisenstein experienced, the film lacks excitement, and it may leave you cold. Silent. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 29.)

A Passage to India—This admirable version of E. M. Forster's 1924 novel about the tragicomedy of British colonial rule was adapted, directed, and edited by David Lean, who knows how to do pomp and the moral hideousness of empire better than practically anybody else around. Peggy Ashcroft comes through with a transcendent piece of acting as Mrs. Moore, and Judy Davis is close to perfection as the repressed Miss Quested, who longs for adventure; they are the two women whose attempt to get to know the Indians socially results in a charge of attempted rape against Dr. Aziz, played by Victor Banerjee, a fine, fluid actor who's like a piece of erotic sculpture. It may not be the highest praise to say that a movie is orderly and dignified, but of its kind this "Passage to India" is awfully good, until the last half hour or so; the concluding scenes wobble all over the place. The cast is just about irreproachable. It includes James Fox, Nigel Havers, Art Malik, Michael Culver, Saeed Jaffrey, Roshan Seth, and Sandra Hotz. (2 hours and 43 minutes.) (1/14/85) (Festival. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex, and New Yorker; through April 25.)

Potemkin (1925; also known as "The Battleship Potemkin")—Voted the greatest film of all time by an international panel of critics in Brussels in 1958, as it was in 1950, and at just about every other competition. "Potemkin" has achieved such an unholy eminence that few people any longer dispute its merits. Great as it undoubtedly is, it's not really a likable film; it's amazing, though—it keeps its freshness and its excitement, even if you resist its cartoon message. Perhaps no other movie has ever had such graphic strength in its images, and the young director Sergei Eisenstein opened up a new technique of psychological stimulation by means of rhythmic editing—"montage." The subject is the 1905 mutiny of the sailors of the battleship Potemkin, and the massacre of the people who sympathized with them. But policies in the U.S.S.R. changed; mutiny could no longer be sanctioned, nor could experimental film techniques, and under Stalin, Eisenstein was purged, partially reinstated, and then fell from grace over and over. "Potemkin" looks astonishingly like a newsreel, and the politically naïve have often taken it as a "documentary." The more knowing have a graceful euphemism: Eisenstein, they say, "sacrificed historical facts for dramatic effect." Silent, with added musical soundtrack. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 29.)

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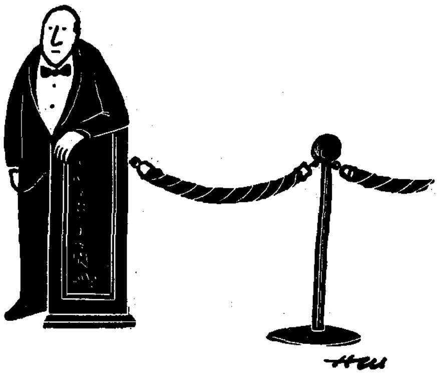
A Private Function—It never quite makes the final leap into lewd farce, but it's pretty funny anyway. The action is set in a small Yorkshire town in 1947, during the worst of the postwar austerity, and the plot involves the efforts of the local pillars of society (Denholm Elliott, John Normington, Richard Griffiths) to fatten a hidden, "unlicensed" pig for a banquet celebrating the nuptials of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip. They run into trouble when the pig is stolen by a mild-mannered chiropodist (Michael Palin), who is encouraged by his Lady Macbeth of a wife (Maggie Smith). The movie is trivial, but alive and unruly; the characters cheat and conspire on such a low level that it suggests "Volpone" set in a cabbage patch. With Liz Smith, Bill Paterson, and Rachel Davies. Directed by Malcolm Mowbray. (3/25/85) (Paris.)

The Purple Rose of Cairo—The thirteenth movie that Woody Allen has directed, and possibly his finest creation. He wrote it for Mia Farrow, and it seems scaled to her cheekbones. The time is 1935, and she is Cecilia, who lives in a small town in New Jersey and can't hold a job for long because her thoughts wander away to the glamorous worlds she sees on the screen. Jeff Daniels plays a dashing young screen character who bounds down from the black-and-white image and into color, and takes Cecilia out of the theatre with him; he's also the ambitious young actor who arrives in the town to try to persuade the character to go back up on the screen where he belongs. Also with Danny Aiello, Stephanie Farrow, Zoe Caldwell, John Wood, Ed Herrmann, Van Johnson, and Dianne Wiest. (3/25/85) (Murray Hill, Beekman, and Cinema Studio. . . . ¶ Movieland; through April 25. . . . ¶ Criterion Theatres; starting April 26.)

Return of the Jedi (1983)—Some of the trick effects in this concluding film of the "Star Wars" trilogy might seem miraculous if the imagery had any lustre, but this is an impersonal and rather junky piece of moviemaking. And every time there's a possibility of a dramatic climax—a chance to engage the audience emotionally with something awesome—the director, Richard Marquand, trashes it. With Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels as C-3PO, and Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca. (R.K.O. Century Warner Twin; through April 25.)

Stardust Memories (1980)—Woody Allen wrote, directed, and stars in this obsessional pastiche, shot in black-and-white, that suggests a dupe of a dupe of Fellini's "8½." Allen plays Sandy Bates, a comedian-writer-director who goes to the Hotel Stardust, a resort on the New Jersey seashore, to be the celebrity-in-residence for a weekend film seminar and is besieged by his fans, who want him to make more comedies, though he doesn't feel like it because all he sees is human suffering. The pushy fans are photographed as Diane Arbus grotesques—big-nosed, fat-lipped, with outsized thick goggles—and Sandy Bates is presented as their victim. To say this picture isn't funny is putting it mildly; it isn't good, either. Everything in it turns uncomfortable, morose, icky. With Charlotte Rampling, Marie-Christine Barrault, Jessica Harper, and Anne DeSalvo. (Cinema Village; April 28-30.)



Stranger Than Paradise—The young writer-director Jim Jarmusch uses a minimalist aesthetic for low-key comic effects. This punk picaresque is in black-and-white, and each scene is a single take followed by a blackout; the three principal characters—deadpan deadbeats—live in dead space. Jarmusch keeps the picture formal and cool, and it has an odd, nonchalant charm; it's fun. But it's softhearted fun—shaggy-dog minimalism—and it doesn't have enough ideas (or laughs) for its ninety-minute length. With John Lurie, Eszter Balint, and Richard Edson. (11/12/84) (Quad Cinema.)

The Stunt Man (1980)—A virtuoso piece of kinetic moviemaking. Working with material that could, with a few false steps, have turned into a tony reality-and-illusion puzzle, the director, Richard Rush, has kept it all rowdy and funny—it's slapstick metaphysics. Steve Railsback is the fugitive who becomes a stunt man, and Peter O'Toole is the flamboyant, fire-eater director who, Railsback thinks, is out to kill him. Playing a protean figure—visionary, fierce-tempered, and ornery, yet ethereal and fey—O'Toole gives a peerless comic performance. With Allen Goorwitz, Barbara Hershey, and Sharon Farrell. (Thalia; May 4.)

The Wages of Fear (1953)—An existential thriller—the most original and shocking French melodrama of the fifties. The opening sequence shows us a verminous South American village and the Europeans trapped in it; they will risk everything for the money to get out. An oil well three hundred miles away has caught fire, and the oil company offers four of them two thousand dollars each to drive two trucks loaded with nitroglycerine (to explode out the fire) over primitive roads. The four are a Corsican (Yves Montand), a Frenchman (Charles Vanel), an Italian (Folco Lulli), and a German (Peter Van Eyck), and the film is about their responses to the gruelling test of driving the trucks. When you can be blown up at any moment, only a fool believes that character determines fate. In this situation, courage and caution are almost irrelevant, and ordinary human responses are futile and archaic—yet nothing else is left. If this isn't a parable of man's position in the modern world, it's at least an illustration of it. Henri-Georges Clouzot's most controversial film, it is also his most powerful; the violence is not used simply for excitement—it's used as in Eisenstein's and Buñuel's films: to force a vision of human experience. With Vera Clouzot and William Tubbs. In French. (Thalia; April 28.)

Winter Kills (1979)—A rampageous thriller written and directed by William Richert, from a novel by Richard Condon. John Huston is superb as a villainous old self-made millionaire, and Jeff Bridges is his all too dutiful son. Also on hand are Eli Wallach, Tony Perkins, Toshiro Mifune, Ralph Meeker, and Belinda Bauer. (Thalia; April 29.)

Witness—An eight-year-old Amish boy (Lukas Haas), on his first trip to a city, sees a murder taking place in the men's room of Philadelphia's Thirtieth Street train station. In order to protect the boy and his widowed mother (Kelly McGillis) from the killers, the police captain (Harrison Ford) who's in charge of the investigation tries to hide their identities, and, with a bullet wound in his side, drives them back to their farm in Lancaster County before he collapses. Directed by the Australian Peter Weir, the movie seems to take its view of the Amish from a quaint dreamland, a Brigadoon of tall golden wheat, and to take its squalid, hyped-up view of life in Philadelphia from prolonged exposure to TV cop shows. With Alexander Godunov, Patti LuPone, Josef Sommer, Danny Glover, and Jan Rubes. (2/25/85) (Loews Tower East, Loews 34th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

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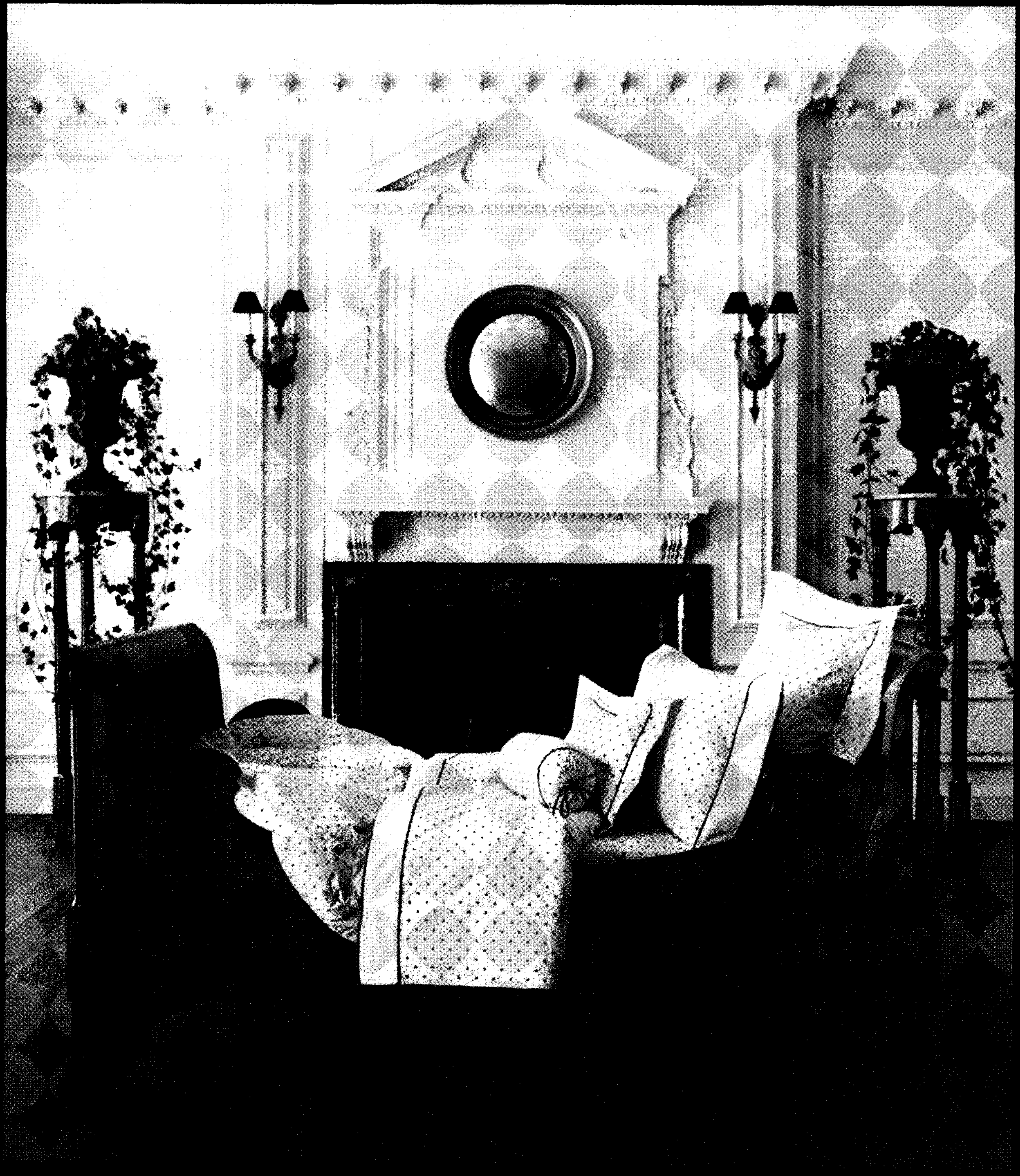

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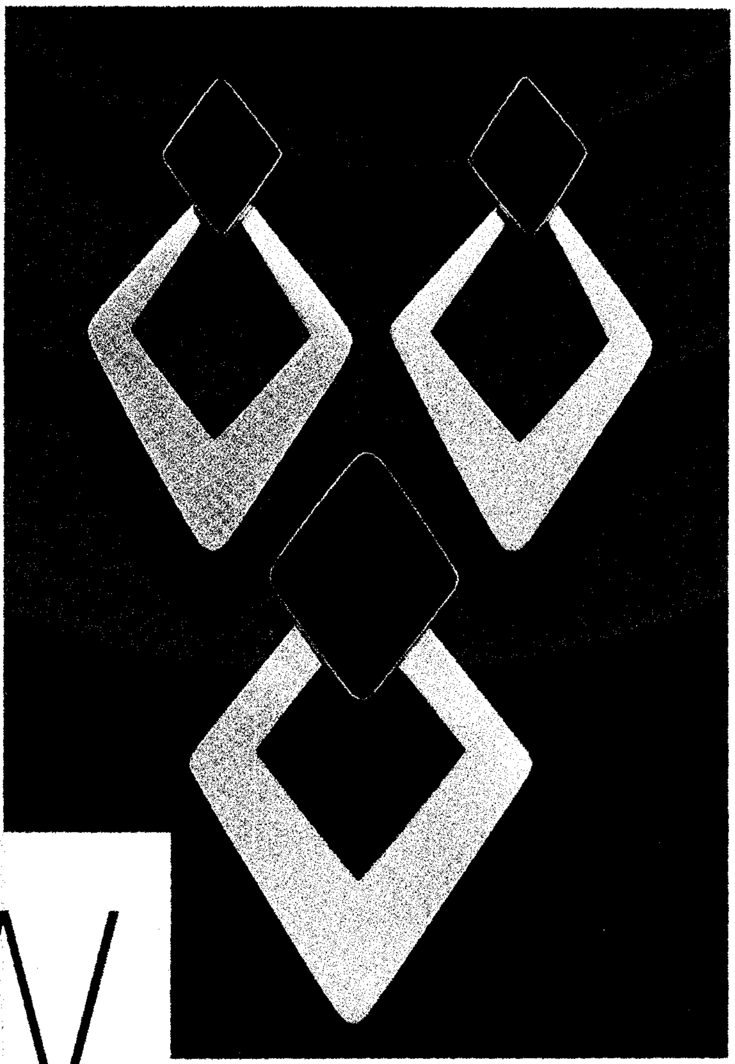

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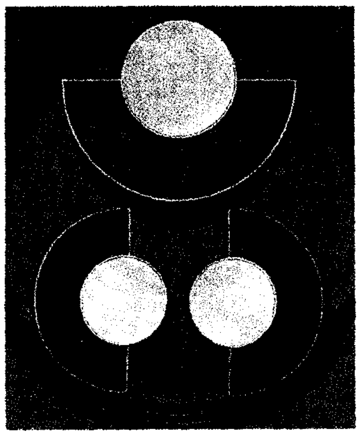

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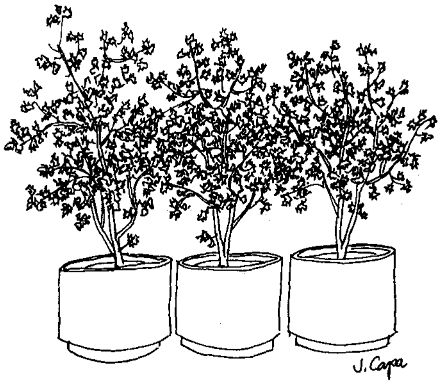
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

AN atmosphere of unreality has hung over the news of recent days. Reality, we like to think, is circumscribed, but the convolutions of what has been happening seem to have no limits. For instance, the Nazis have kept springing up in unexpected settings. Their most notable appearance, of course, has been in the debate over President Reagan's plan to visit a cemetery of German war dead during his forthcoming visit to Germany. The President's response to those who objected to that plan was to supplement it with a plan to visit a Nazi concentration camp—something he had earlier decided against. (The President is "a cheerful politician," an anonymous aide had explained. "He does not like to grovel in a grisly scene like Dachau.") This solution suggested a sort of Op-Ed approach to history, in which the Nazis and their victims are given a hundred and fifty words each to express their "point of view" and the truth presumably lies "somewhere in between." That "balanced" approach, however, angered Jewish groups, veterans' groups, and most of the rest of us, and there was vigorous protest. The protest increased when the President asserted that the Nazi soldiers were just as much victims of Nazism as the concentration-camp inmates. The President had disturbed a settled judgment of history, and in the ensuing contretemps history's dead, exhumed from their graves for present polemical and political purposes, could not find their way back to their resting places. The Nazis also figured, implicitly, in some remarks of Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former Ambassador to the United Nations. This time, they popped up in Latin America. The proper analogy for the left-wing challenge in Nicaragua, Kirkpatrick said, was not, as many supposed, Vietnam but, rather, Munich—the city in which, in 1938, Neville Chamberlain acceded to the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia. While Reagan was bent on laying wreaths on the graves of Nazis in Germany, Kirkpatrick was standing tall against them in Nicaragua. Of course, back in the days of Vietnam our leaders had told us repeatedly that *Vietnam* was another Munich, so it was confusing to be told now that Nicaragua was yet another Munich but without being another Vietnam. If B equals A, and C equals A, doesn't C equal B? Not, apparently, in the spectral world of today's politics. Also confusing was the fact that, with Hitler reportedly on our southern doorstep, the recommended countermeasure was a mere fourteen million dollars in aid to the "Contras"—the rebels who are trying to overthrow the Sandinista regime. Why not a hundred and forty million, we wondered, or a hundred and forty billion? Wouldn't fourteen million be inadequate to stop the new Hitler—almost, you might say, a policy of appeasement?

And the Nazis made yet another appearance on the scene—this time when the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, a bipartisan group of about a hundred and twenty-five members of Congress, reported last week that a score of ultra-right groups here at home, some of them with ties to neo-Nazi and paramilitary outfits, have been helping to finance not the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (Mrs. Kirkpatrick's candidates for Nazihood) but their opponents, the Contras (whom the neo-Nazis apparently saw as the more fitting heirs to Hitler). To make things even more confusing, the President had recently called the Contras "the moral equal of our Founding Fathers." And our feeling of unreality was not lessened by the revelation that among others helping to support the Contras was the Unification Church, the cult founded by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, of South Korea, who in 1982 was convicted of tax evasion and conspiracy to obstruct justice. It was Moon's cult, among others, that gave rise to that remarkable new profession in the United States—the "de-programmers." De-programmers are people who are hired by parents to wrest their children away from cults, often by more or less seizing the young people and subjecting them to swift de-indoctrination. Just why parents might want to de-program their children of Sun Myung Moon's teaching was made memorably clear when, at his order, a mass wedding of more than two thousand couples, many of whom had met their future spouses only a few weeks earlier—and, in fact, the two being joined were in some cases from different countries and, furthermore, did not speak each other's languages—was held in Madison Square Garden while helpless parents, some of them in tears, looked on from a distance. As it happened, the Moon cult, too, was recently making news elsewhere. The Washington *Times*, a newspaper funded by Moon's church, had found a new editor in chief, Arnaud de Borchgrave, who is the co-author of "The Spike," a novel that portrays the media in the United States as being manipulated by the K.G.B. De Borch-



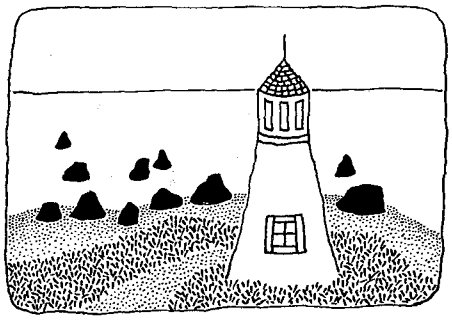
grave immediately announced that it would be his mission to provide an alternative to the "liberal" press in the United States. It was not long before the President—a man whom we think of as being light-years away from neo-Nazis, mass weddings of strangers, and fantastic conspiracy theories about the media—placed a call to de Borchgrave to congratulate him on his new appointment.

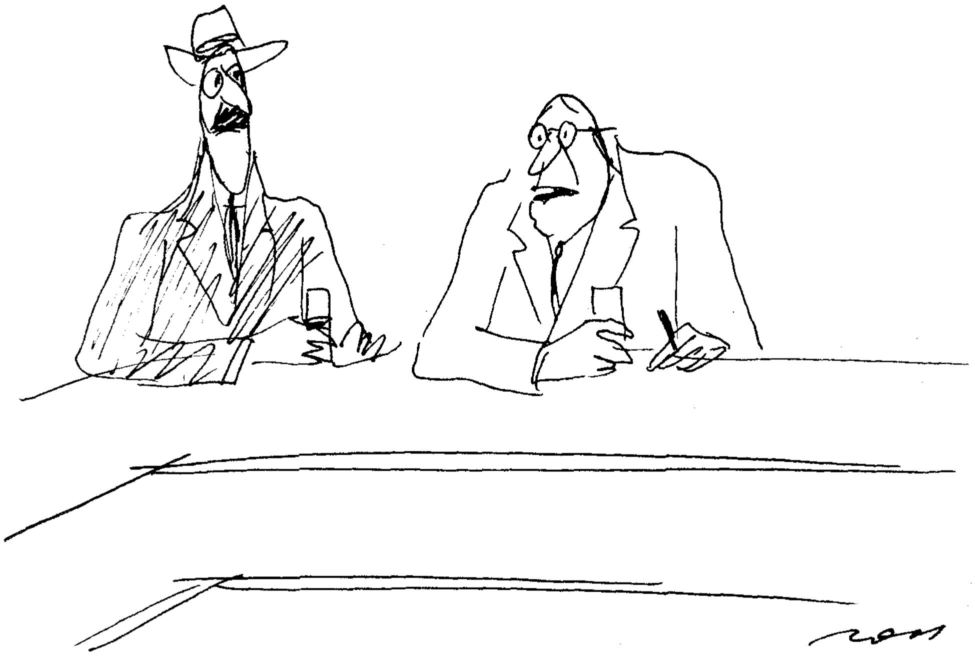
But dominating the week's news, and somehow seeming to set its tone, was the outsize figure of Ted Turner—a man who it sometimes seems is unconfined by the limits of ordinary life, even of reality itself. In the past, he had said that the presidents of the three major television networks were guilty of treason. He had won the America's Cup. He had pushed a baseball from first base to home plate (he's the owner of the Atlanta Braves) with his nose. Now he wanted to own CBS, and planned to acquire it with what Wall Street analysts were pleased to call "junk bonds." Cheering him on was Senator Jesse Helms, who had his own plan to take CBS over from the "liberals." And Turner, it developed, is also a man who from time to time has had the Nazis on his mind: he was quoted as having said that the networks are "the greatest enemies that America has ever had, posing a greater threat than Nazi Germany or Tojo's Japan." So he, too, was enlisted in the latter-day tilting against Hitler's ghost. Things in the news that are normally kept separate were getting jumbled together. Grave and trivial events were being confounded. Major and minor figures of history were being placed on an equal footing. The dead were getting mixed up with the living. Hitler, the concentration-camp dead, the German war dead, our war dead, the Contras, the Sandinistas, the Vietnamese, the Founding Fathers, President Reagan, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, and Ted Turner were whirling before our eyes, and as the days went by it was getting harder and harder to tell them all apart.

•

IT'S many years now since we first came upon "Eye and Tooth," a poem that Robert Lowell included in "For the Union Dead," his 1964 collection, and yet its concluding line keeps resurfacing for us, like a refrain. The poem is another one of those exquisitely composed, high-pitched, almost high-strung confessionals that Lowell was at the time perfecting. In the end, the extravagant rhetoric virtually overwhelms its simple occasion: Lowell, apparently, had slightly scratched the surface of one of his eyeballs and was having to spend the day in a darkened room while the cornea healed; and in that darkened room he was managing to conjure up images of ever-increasing morbidity, a veritable carnival of self-laceration. But then, abruptly, he found himself coming up short. "I am tired," he admits in the closing line. "Everyone's tired of my turmoil."

It's a subtle inversion of that line which keeps recurring to us these days, in different contexts, as we ponder the ongoing news from yet another hopeless, sorry corner of the world. Youngstown. Chile. Ethiopia. South Africa. We're tired. Everyone's tired of their turmoil. The other day, we noticed that this turmoil fatigue was beginning to set in for us around the subject of Poland. A friend had called, full of urgency, to tell us that three of Solidarity's leading activists were once again being detained under dismal conditions and that it appeared they were about to be railroaded through a trial on trumped-up charges that could mean prison terms of up to five years for each of them. We were familiar with the names: Adam Michnik, who was a founder of KOR, the Committee for the Defense of the Workers, and is a brilliant movement theorist and one of the most eloquent political pamphleteers of our time; Bogdan Lis, who was one of the original members of the Committee of Free Trade Unions for the Baltic Coast, the seed organization from which Solidarity itself suddenly sprang during the August, 1980, strike in Gdansk; and Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, who managed to forge a particularly dynamic underground organization in Wroclaw during the months after the December, 1981, declaration of martial law and before his arrest in October, 1982. All three of them spent substantial amounts of time in General Jaruzelski's prisons during the period of martial law; each was the subject of international pressure campaigns aimed at obtaining his release; and the regime garnered considerable propaganda advantage last year when each, in turn, was included in the series of phased releases under the amnesty through which General Jaruzelski tried to prove to the world that the situation in Poland was returning to normal. The United States government, for example, had made Poland's long-sought entry into the International Monetary Fund contingent on the release of political prisoners, including these three; and, indeed, with their release the Reagan Administration did lift its objection to Poland's I.M.F. application. That application is still proceeding apace, although several of those who were released have now been rearrested. It's not just these three; there are dozens of others, including another hero of the Gdansk strike, Andrzej Gwiazda, who has been in prison since last December, his liberty having lasted less than five months. Around the time of his initial release, Gwiazda was asked how he felt now that he was free. "Not at all free," he'd replied. "Now I'm in a prison yard of three hundred and twenty thousand square kilometres, and the only difference is that here the guard doesn't lead me, I lead him." At the time of his most recent rearrest, during a peaceful demonstration, he shouted out his name and phone number to passersby—a common practice in Poland, where the police often prove distressingly slow to inform family members of the location and status of a newly detained individual. "Remember 56-28-26, Andrzej Gwiazda, Gdansk!" he'd cried out, counting on someone to pass the word along. The authorities, however, misconstrued Gwiazda's call as a defiant invocation of that honor roll of prior Polish uprisings (" '56, '68, '70, '76 . . .") and responded by summarily slapping an extra two months onto the prison sentence he is currently serving. As for Michnik, Lis, and Frasyniuk, they have yet to be tried, and have been confined under especially unsavory conditions in a Gdansk jail (which once served as a Nazi prison) ever since their arrests, in mid-February. For at least part of the long waiting period, Lis has been on a hunger strike. And yet, this time around, the world's press seems barely perturbed (there have been virtually no stories on these developments, even in journals that until recently were covering Polish events quite extensively),





"*I happen to be a person of rare taste. Yet nobody identifies me as such.*"

• •

and diplomats likewise appear unbothered (just this past week, "in response" to last year's political amnesty, the United States lifted its suspension of American landing rights for the Polish airline, LOT).

And our own attention lags as well, our stamina falters. We seem able to recognize and honor courage only when it makes itself instantaneously manifest; and then our interest immediately wanders. This unfortunate tendency of ours—the ally, of course, of every tyranny; tyranny's Fifth Column inside each of us—reminds us of another poem from the sixties: one by Jack Gilbert, entitled "The Abnormal Is Not Courage." As it happens, Gilbert took an earlier moment from Polish history—September 1, 1939—as the launching point for his meditation, which begins:

> The Poles rode out from Warsaw
> against the German
> Tanks on horses. Rode knowing, in
> sunlight, with sabers,
> A magnitude of beauty that allows
> me no peace.

In the very next lines, however, Gilbert doubles back:

> And yet this poem would lessen that
> day. Question
> The bravery. Say it's not courage.

A few lines later, he acknowledges:

> It was impossible, and with form.
> They rode in sunlight.
> Were mangled. But I say courage is
> not the abnormal.
> Not the marvelous act. . . .
> The worthless can manage in public,
> or for the moment.

No, he insists, courage is not "the bounty of impulse" but, rather, "the evident conclusion of being":

> Not strangeness, but a leap forward
> of the same quality.
> Accomplishment. The even loyalty.
> But fresh.
> Not the Prodigal Son, nor Faustus.
> But Penelope.
> The thing steady and clear. . . .
> The marriage,
> Not the month's rapture. Not the
> exception. The beauty
> That is of many days. Steady and
> clear.
> It is the normal excellence, of long
> accomplishment.

Ironically, it was precisely one of Solidarity's greatest accomplishments that, thanks to the clearheaded urgings of activists such as Michnik, Lis, Frasyniuk, and Gwiazda, it managed to break the historic Polish pattern of heedless, romantic, hopelessly futile grand gestures. Managed to, and is still managing to, in the face of witheringly cynical provocations by the regime. "This situation will not be changed by a single act of national heroism," Frasyniuk wrote in an open letter last December. "We must be aware of the fact that to achieve lasting political and social changes and to build a truly self-governing and independent society will take us many years of hard work. We must become our own hope."

That inspiring evenness of vision is a key element in Solidarity's ongoing moral force, and yet it is precisely here that our own witness has been falling short. We become bored, we grow tired of their turmoil—we, who are not asked to contribute even the slightest fraction of their sacrifice. To the extent that we are able to muster any interest any longer, it usually takes the form of bemused curiosity about the wellsprings of their perseverance. How can they, we wonder—how *do* they—keep it up?

And that brings to mind another American poet, another poem—this time, the late Paul Blackburn's "Matchbook Poem":

> BUT WHY do you always go to the
> wall?
> WHY does he go to the wall?
>
> You go to the wall
> because that's where
> the door is
>
> maybe.

The Poles are burrowing. Against incredible odds—odds that grow longer by the day—they keep burrowing. What is so hard to realize is that they are burrowing for all of us. That vision of "a truly self-governing and independent society" is one that no country in the world has so far even come near to attaining. The opening they are attempting may yet be an opening for all of us. That's why it's so important that we all shake off our fatigue, that we overcome our boredom at their turmoil. It is we who must achieve an even loyalty, but fresh. Each time they go to the wall, we have to go to the wall, too—at least in the form of renewing our vigilance, sustaining their witness. Because, finally, that is indeed where the door may be.

• •

Horizons

TO fly! Mankind has always dreamed the dream of flight, of soaring and circling, of swooping and of gliding. Skyward man has looked, cloudward he has yearned, sunward his soul has striven. To break free of Earth's tenacious grip. To soar like an eagle, to circle like a hawk, skyward. To fly! High!

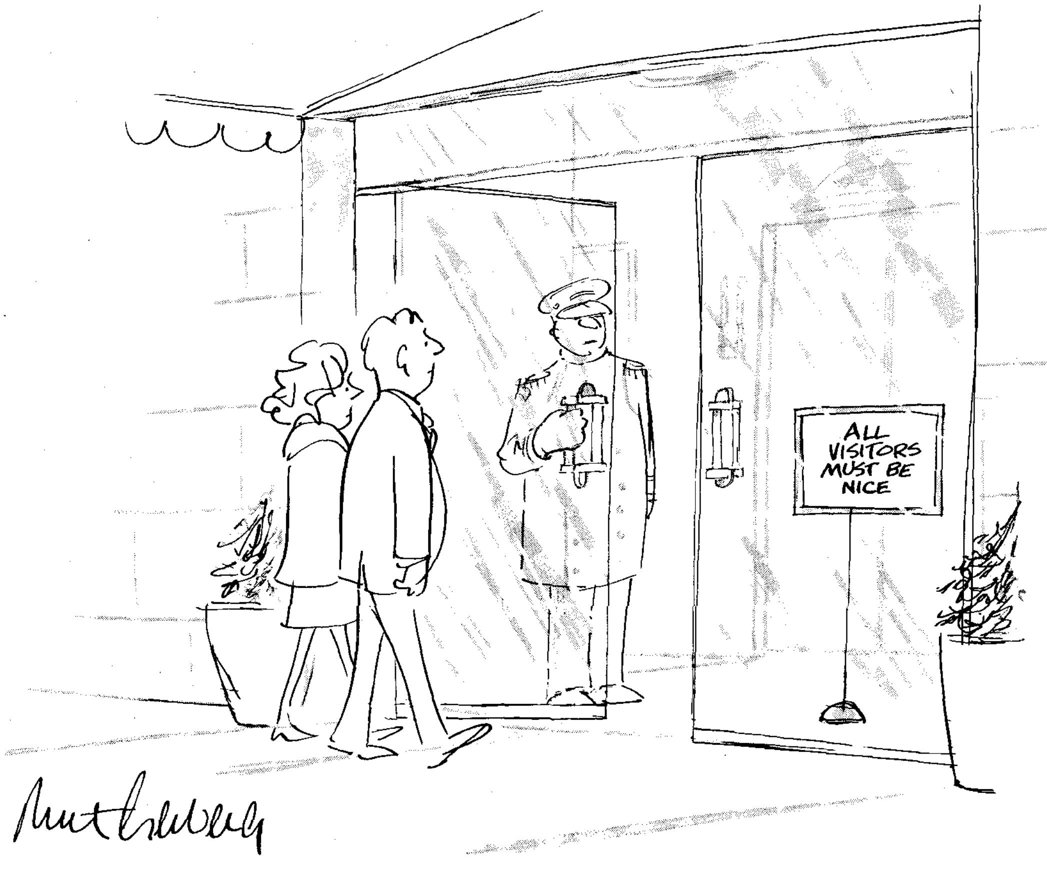
And then the dream came true. In these latter days, we can all fly; if you're a senator, you can go into orbit and drink orange juice through a tube, even. Flight's fine, especially when you have to get to Boston for a meeting, but it destroyed this dream, which dated back at least to the days when the ancient astronauts landed in their space vehicles and wouldn't let anyone borrow them for a spin. (Some people don't believe in ancient astronauts, but what about the Easter Island stones? Also, there is a painting in a cave somewhere of a man in a *space helmet*.) The achievement of flight badly damaged people's dream mechanism; the energy formerly spent imagining hawklike gyrations split in a hundred different directions. The sad whimsy of the designated-hitter rule, for instance, could have grown up only in an age of desperate overaviation. Once, the sky—our common, global roof—united our desires. Now fragmented, isolated groups dream their own dreams.

We came across one such group a week ago Sunday at nine in the morning in Central Park just south of Seventy-second Street. The New York Walkers Club began six years ago with a dozen people and a vision—a vision of hip-swivelling, arm-pumping, heel-and-toe racewalking. The club has grown. It may not replace flight as *the* dream, but six hundred people joined last year alone. "I'm not knocking running," Howard Jacobson, the club's president, said several times to the crowd that had gathered for a Central Park clinic. "But walking is virtually injury-free. The average runner plants his foot with a force equivalent to between three and a half and six times body weight, while walking is a smooth transfer of body weight." Walking is an alternating loss and recovery of balance, he said. "We fall forward with each step, but instead of smashing our noses we put out our other leg to act as a lever."

Some of the metropolitan area's premier racewalkers joined in a five-kilometre race through the Park following Jacobson's lecture. They went fast—close to two hundred strides a minute, some of them—while judges checked to make sure that every one of them kept one foot on the ground at all times and straightened his or her legs with each step. "We don't want some bent-kneed Groucho Marx kind of walking," Jacobson reminded them. The competitive walking looked a little gruelling; we avoid gruelling. But Jacobson said four-fifths of the club's members don't actually race, engaging instead in the somewhat slower but still brisk Healthwalk. We joined Jacobson and about a hundred and fifty novices in an arm-swinging stroll down the Park's Literary Walk, past the bronze stares of Bobby Burns and Sir Walter Scott and Fitz-Greene Halleck. Our gaggle looked absurd—it looked, in fact, like a tour group that had just been told it wouldn't get to see the Sistine Chapel unless it *hurried*—but it felt not bad to be walking fast, though the view is superior from an airplane.

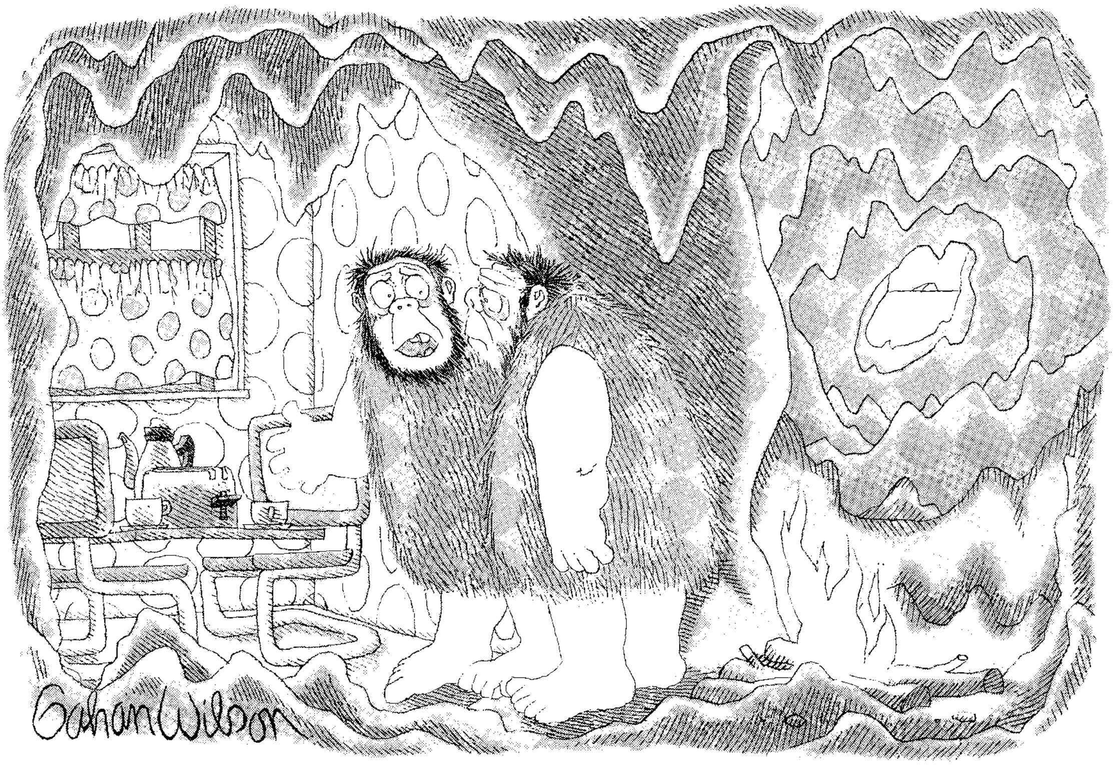
That Word

DAVID, a twenty-seven-year-old entertainment lawyer from the East Side, was one of four "new traditional homemakers" that the Frozen Food Action Communications Team introduced to the press at the Helmsley Palace recently. The team dreams its own dream, not of flying but of defrosting—of Icarus just near enough to the sun so that his wings turn a crunchy golden brown. David has grown "real, real health-conscious," he informed us, so he attends a health club three times a week; he also works ten hours a day and goes to many concerts and movies. "There's so much to do in New York you could really wear yourself down," he said. "My idea of frozen foods came from my childhood—chicken potpies. I'm a little too sophisticated for that now. You go to the supermarket and it's real amazing. Frozen food comes on plastic plates now, not in tin pans, and it's microwavable. It's real convenient. I come home, I change, I pay bills, and all the time dinner is cooking. I eat a lot of boneless-chicken dishes. I like boneless chicken. The Sara Lee frozen croissants taste better than the croissants from the croissant place on the street."


ALL VISITORS MUST BE NICE

"What's now happening is the computer is interrogating the shoe," Dr. Peter Cavanagh told a press conference at the University Club some days later. The shoe, made by Puma for the real, real health-conscious market, costs two hundred dollars. Attached to the back of the heel is an electronic inertia switch; when you're finished running, you take off the shoe and plug it into your Commodore 64 or your Apple IIe, and it tells you how far you've run (or, if you're cool, how far you've walked), and it estimates the number of calories you have burned. So said Dr. Cavanagh, who has testified at several murder trials regarding footprints. He also said, "You can program the shoe so that when you've run the distance you want to run—say, ten kilometres—it starts beeping. If you're a long way from home, I don't know what you do—you get a cab, I guess."

"I'm young," David told us, "and I'm urban, and I'm professional, but that word—I don't like it much, because people often say it in a snide way."



"And this is the breakfast nook."

• •

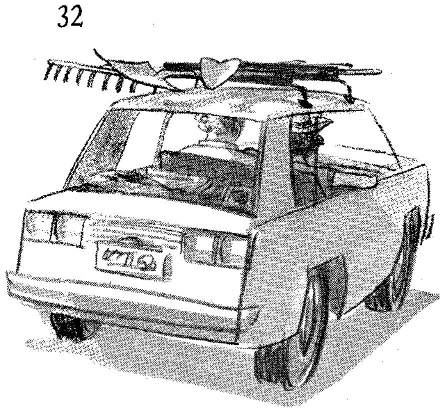
Hang Nine

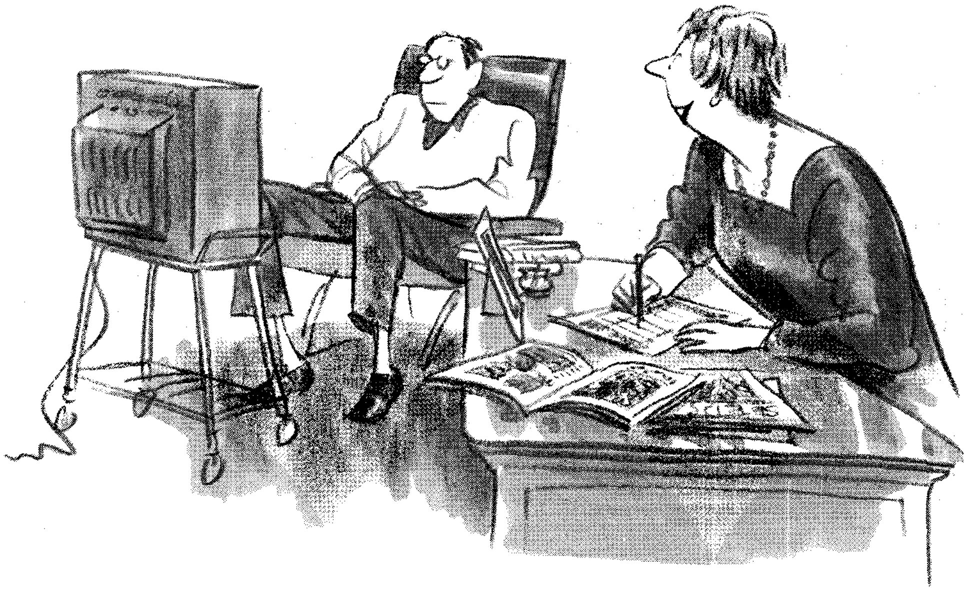
"MY father, he used to work shaping surfboards—that means he smoothed the entire surface of the polyurethane-foam blanks before they were fibre-glassed into finished boards," Mike Parker told us. "He shaped more boards than anyone else in the world. He shaped President Nixon's surfboard. David Eisenhower bought it as a present. I heard that Nixon tried it once, but you can't learn to do surfing when you're older. If you grow up knowing how, though, you can do it all your life. I surfed at the San Onofre Surfing Club, near San Clemente, when I was a little kid, and there was one spot called Old Man's, because the old guys surfed it. *Retired* people. There was this one guy, Pop Proctor, who'd been a member about forever. They were getting ready to give him his hundredth-birthday party, but he didn't quite make it. I don't know if they had the party anyway."

We were talking with Parker at ABC No Rio, a community arts-and-education space and gallery on Rivington Street, on the lower East Side. Nine of his surfing paintings hung on the walls. "When I was in high school, maybe forty per cent of the guys were surfers, and we wanted everyone to know it—the way we dressed, the way we talked," Parker said. It's a small, isolated culture, but apparently a powerful one, for his canvases didn't resemble much we've seen in New York—there's a different idea of what a body looks like, and a face. "I started painting, in Southern California, after high school, like in adult classes where the teacher paints a picture and everyone else paints the same thing," he said. "I came to New York about four years ago, because culturally California was so limiting. The only way I could learn about cultural things was by watching PBS. My main problem at first was: What do you paint? You could paint *anything*. You're so totally unlimited it's like mind-boggling. I could have painted flowers, but what do flowers mean to me? Surfing means something to me." Parker painted a series of big, straightforward canvases: perfect waves, setting suns, pretty girls—a dream of surfing. "Surfrealism, I called it. In 1983, I went back to California to enter two Surfrealist paintings in a Laguna Beach show. A surfer-restaurateur bought them." Returning to New York, Parker began to explore Post-Surfrealism. His nine paintings tell a story, he explained. "In this first one, the guy's lying in bed in the morning and his friend jumps in the window and tells him about the swell that's come up during the night. The friend is all yellow—he's a symbolic character, made out of light. Later on, there's a guy made of water. Light and water are the two elements surfers thrive on. That's a little philosophy, I guess. Anyway, they go out and wait for a wave. They're excited, nervous. This one's eating a banana—I never actually saw anyone eat a banana while surfing, but probably you could, because it's in a peel and wouldn't get wet. O.K., they get a great ride. Now, in this next one the weather's starting to change. The wind god blows, causing a waterspout, and it sucks them into outer space. And then here comes this spaceship driven by the character made out of water. It looks dangerous, but really it's rescuing them. It's taking them to the Secret Surf Planet. They are welcomed with some liquid—some champagne, maybe. See those coils coming out of the water character's head? I figured out those are some kind of thought processes that enable the surfers to breathe in this new environment."

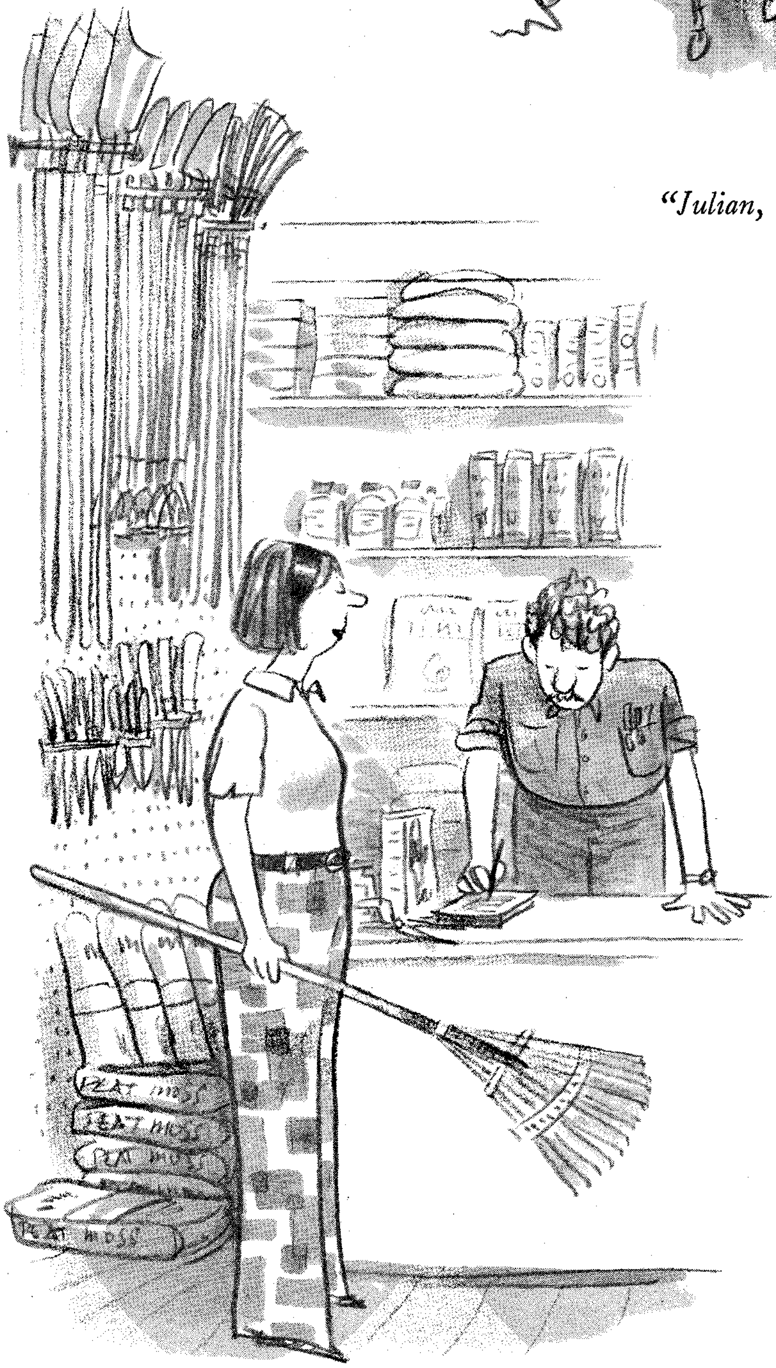
We found the paintings righteous, to borrow a surfing superlative of Parker's, but he said they have yet to make him rich. "I drive a horse and buggy in Central Park to pay the rent," he told us. "Some horses are harder to control than others. But some of the horses drive themselves. They'll be stopped at a crosswalk, and they'll be watching the 'Don't Walk' sign, and they'll count the number of times it flashes, and they'll know when the light's about to change. And they'll start to move on their own—they'll *jump* the light."

GARDENERS

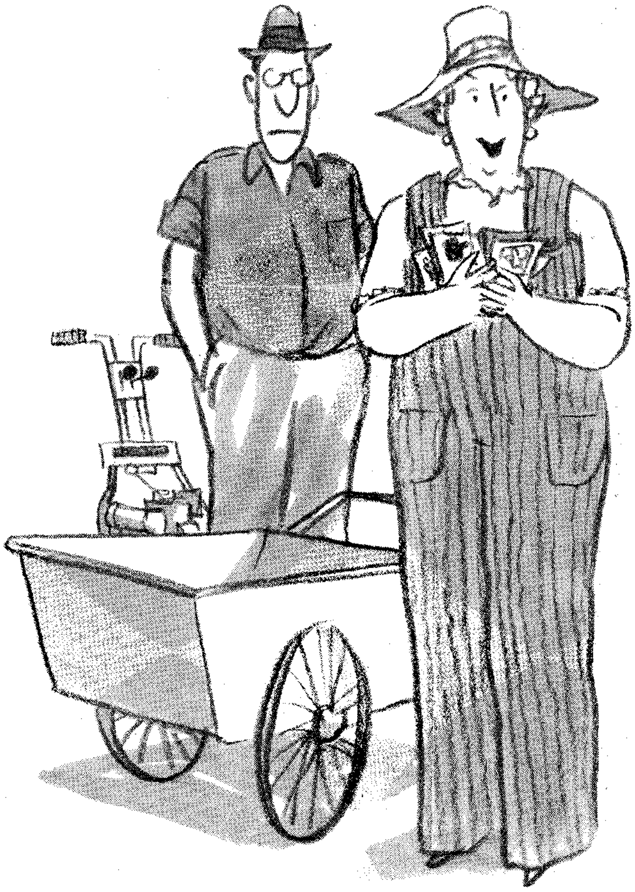




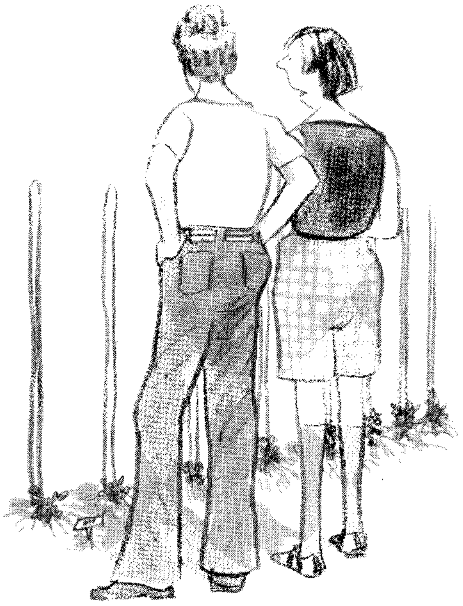
"Julian, I'm including a packet of Golden Cross Bantam just for you in my order to Burpee."


PEAT MOSS
PEAT MOSS
PEAT MOSS
PEAT MOSS

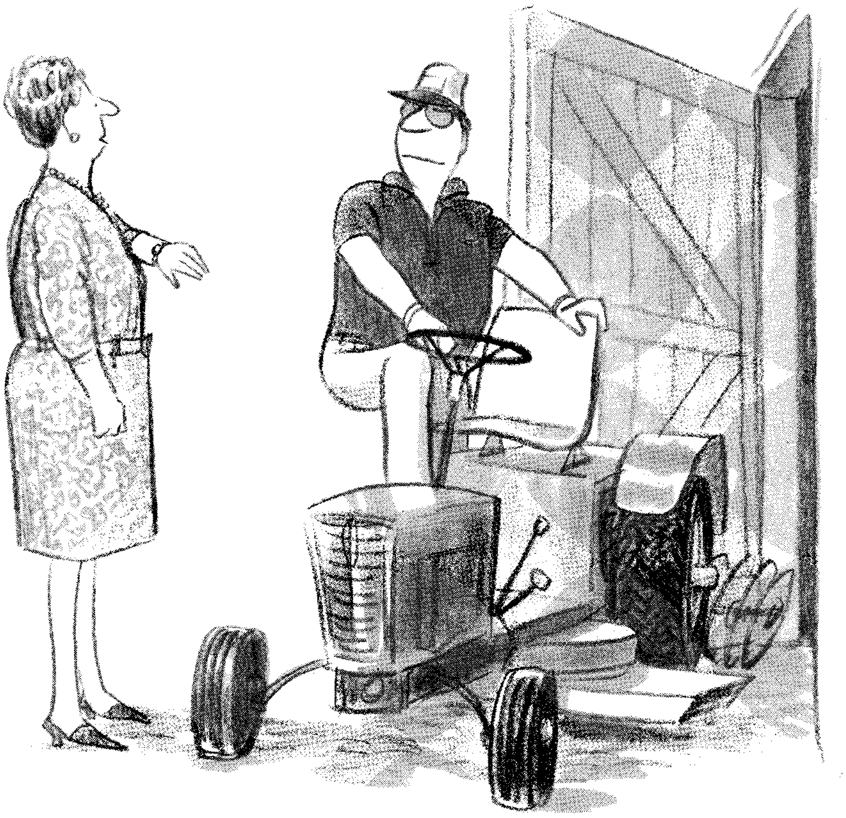
"That's the former Stevens place. It's now Tattersall Farm."



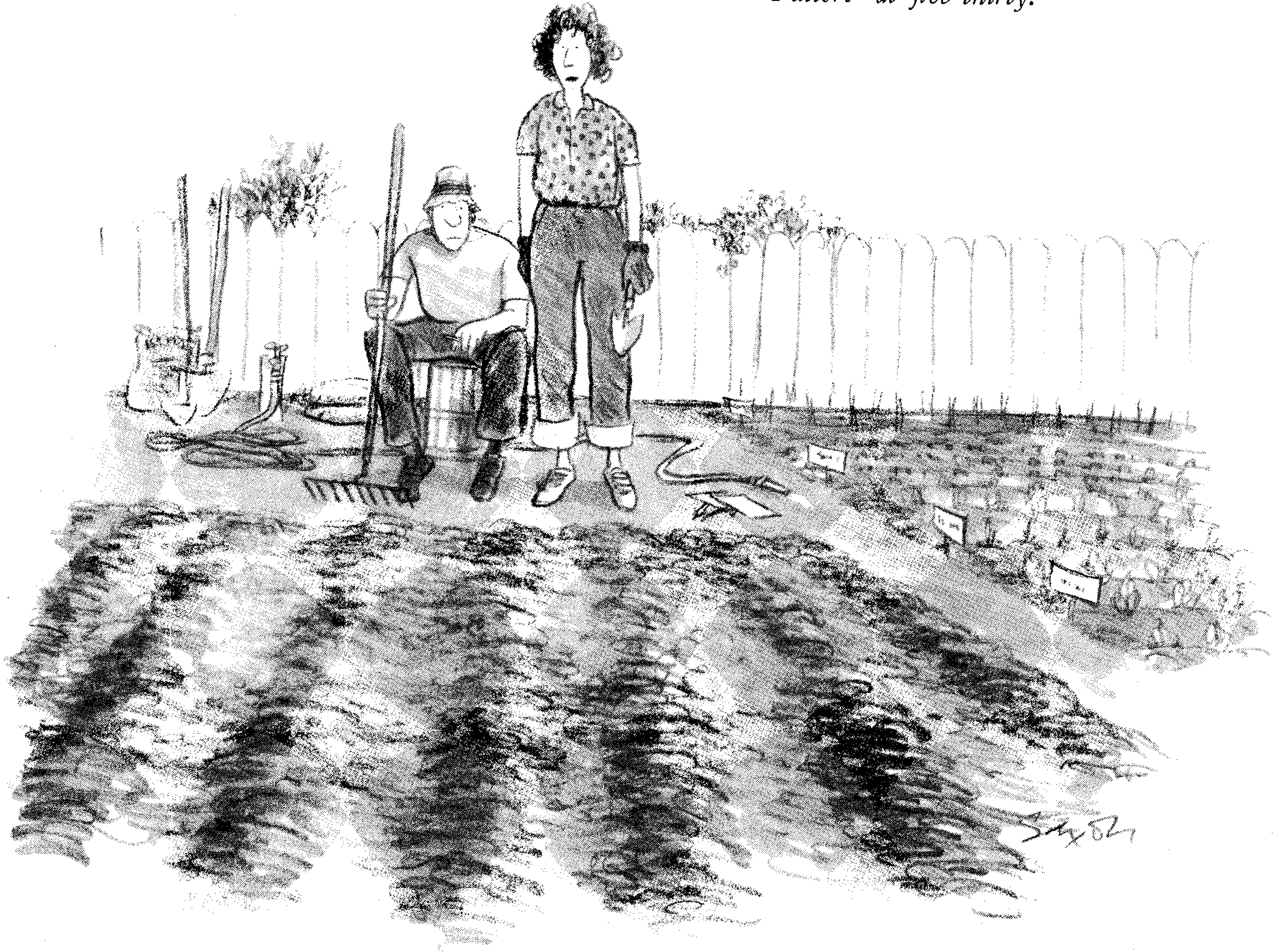
"This year, we're just going to have a riot of color!"



"But what are we going to do *with thirty bushels of Big Boy tomatoes?"*



"Remember, Philip—we're due at the Fullers' at five-thirty."

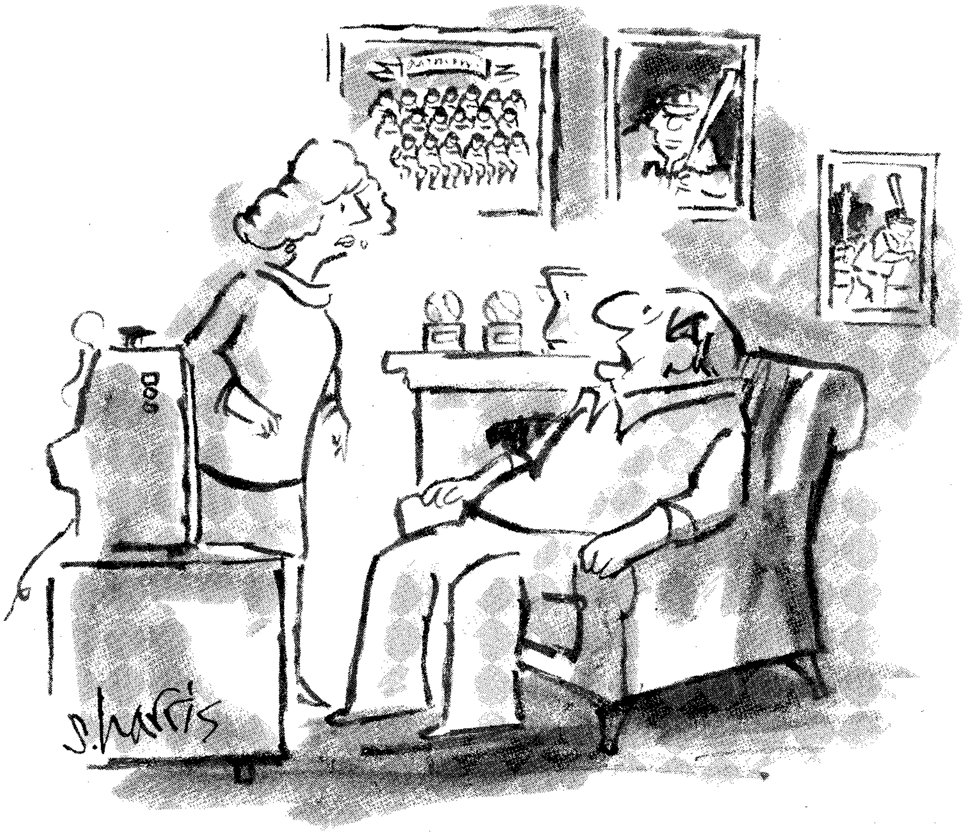


"Shouldn't we let a few rows lie fallow one year?"

CONSTRUCTION

I WENT to Los Angeles and, in due course, returned, having finished the relatively important matter of business which had taken me to Los Angeles, something to do with a contract, a noxious contract, which I signed, after the new paragraphs were inserted and initialled by all parties, tiresome business of initialling numberless copies of documents reproduced on onionskin, which does not feel happy in the hand. One of the lawyers wore a woven straw Western hat with a snake hatband. He had an excessive suntan. The hatband displayed as its centerpiece the head of a rattlesnake with its mouth stretched and the fangs touchable. Helen made a joke about it, she does something in the West Coast office, I'm not sure what it is but she is treated with considerable deference, they all seem to defer to her, an attractive woman, of course, but also one who manifests a certain authority, a quiet authority, had I had the time I would have asked someone what she was "all about," as we say, but I had to get back, one cannot spend all one's time in lawyers' offices in Los Angeles. Although it was January and there was snow, blizzarding even, elsewhere, the temperature was in the fifties and the foliage, the collection of strange-looking trees, not trees but something between a tree and a giant shrub, that distinguishes the city, that hides what is less prepossessing than the shrubs or trees—I refer to the local construction—which serves as a scrim or screen between the eye and the local construction, much of it admirable no doubt, the foliage was successfully carrying out its function, making Los Angeles a pleasant, reticent, green place, which fact I noticed before my return from Los Angeles.

The flight back from Los Angeles was without event, very calm and smooth in the night. I had a cup of hot chicken noodle soup which the flight attendant was kind enough to prepare for me; I handed her the can of chicken noodle soup and she (I suppose, I don't know the details) heated it in her microwave oven and then brought me the cup of hot chicken noodle soup which I had handed her in canned form, also a number of drinks which helped make the calm, smooth flight more so. The plane was half empty, there had been a half-hour delay in getting off the ground which I spent marvelling at a sentence in a magazine, the sentence reading as follows: "[Name of film] explores the issues of love and sex without being chaste." I marvelled over this for the full half hour we sat on the ground waiting for clearance on my return from Los Angeles, thinking of adequate responses, such as "Well, we for God's sake avoided *that* at least," but no response I could conjure up was equal to or could be equal to the original text which I tore out of the magazine and folded and placed, folded, in my jacket pocket for further consideration at some time in the future when I might need a giggle. Then deplaning and carrying my bag through the mostly deserted tunnels of the airport to the cab rank, I obtained a cab driven by a black man who was, he said, leaving the cab business to begin a messenger service and had that very morning taken delivery on a truck, a 1985 Toyota, for the purpose and was, as soon as his shift ended, going to not only show the 1985 Toyota truck to his mother but also pick up his cargo insurance. He asked me what I thought about the economy and I said that I thought it would continue to do well, nationally, for a time but that the local economy, by which I meant that of the whole region, would I thought not do as well, because of structural problems. He then told me a story about being in the jungle in Vietnam with a fellow who had been there for seventeen months and got a letter from his wife in which she announced that she was pregnant but (and I quote) "hadn't been doing anything," and that his colleague, in the jungle, had then gone crazy, and I said, "Seventeen months, what was he doing there for seventeen months?," the normal tour being one year, and he said, "He extended," and I said, "He extended?," and he said, "Yeah, he extended," and I said, "*Then he was crazy before he got the letter*," and he said, "Bingo!," and we both said, "Hoo, hoo," in healthy fashion. He dropped me off in front of my building and I went upstairs and made a thickish cup of Hot Spiced Cider from an envelope of Hot Spiced Cider Mix that I had acquired free when I bought the bottle of Tree Top Apple Cider that was in my refrigerator, and took off my tie, and sat there, in my house, on my return from Los Angeles.



"Sure I'm depressed. I haven't hit a grand-slam home run in twenty-seven years."

I thought about the food I had had in Los Angeles and about what I had

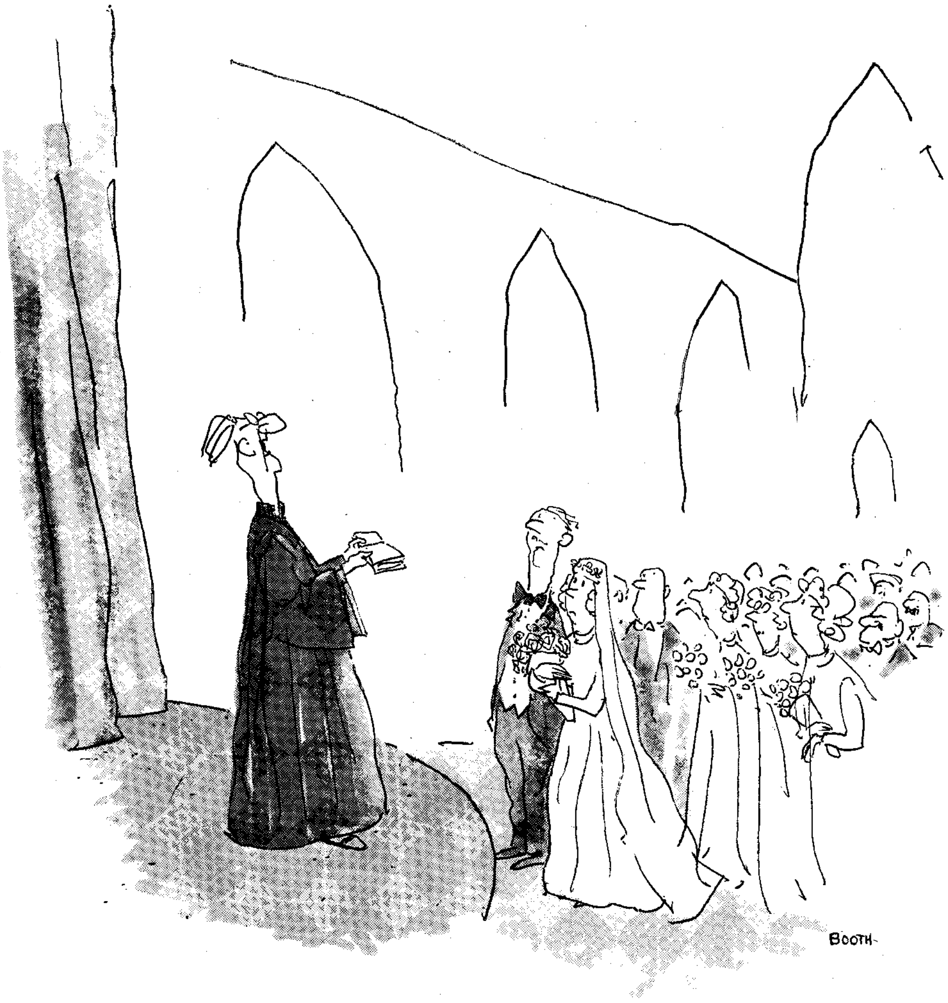
"Who's the cutest creature in the woods?"

• •

to do next, the next day, the next several days, and of course about the long-range plan. I sat there in the darkened room without a shirt (I had taken off my shirt) thinking about the food I had had in Los Angeles, the rather ordinary Tournedos Rossini, the rather too down-to-earth Huevos Rancheros in a very expensive place that nevertheless presented its Huevos Rancheros on a *tin plate*, and its coffee in *cracked blue enamel mugs*, the Chuck Wagon was its name. Breakfast there with Helen, who had an odd air of authority, one could not immediately fathom its source and I was too tired, after a long night in Los Angeles, too tired or insufficiently interested, to ask the questions, of either her associates or my associates or of Helen directly, that would have allowed me to fathom the source of her authority in Los Angeles, Los Angeles being to me a place where one went, of necessity, at rare intervals, to sign and/or initial or renegotiate whatever needed such attention. I noticed very little about the place, the shrubs or trees, saw a bit of the ocean from my hotel-room window, saw an old woman in a green bathrobe on the balcony of the building opposite, at the same level, the eleventh floor, and wondered if she was a guest or if she was one of those persons who clean the place; if she was one of those persons who clean the place it seemed unlikely that she would come to work in a green bathrobe and I am sure that she wore a green bathrobe, but she did not resemble a guest or tenant, she had a bent, broken, stooped, losing-the-game look that defined a person who was not winning the game. Seldom am I in error about such things, the eidetic memory as we say, saw a figure of some kind possibly female atop the Mormon temple, the figure seemed to be leading the people somewhere, onward, presumably, saw several unpainted pictures on the street, from the windows of the limousine in which I was moved from place to place, Pietàs mostly, one creature holding another creature in its arms, at bus stops, mostly. Los Angeles.

I thought about sand although I saw no sand in Los Angeles, they told me that there were beaches in the vicinity; the bit of ocean I had seen from the window of my hotel room on Wilshire implied sand but I saw no sand during my not extensive stay in Los Angeles, where I signed various documents having to do with the long-range plan, which I sat thinking about in the dank without my shirt in my own house upon my return from Los Angeles. I mentally compared our city to Los Angeles, a competition in which our city was not found inferior, you may be sure, a weighing of values in which our city was not given short weight, you may be sure. In the matter of madhouses alone we suggest Los Angeles. To say nothing of our grand boulevards and taverns (where never, never, never would one be served Huevos Rancheros on a tin plate) and our excellent mayor who habitually meets the City Council with a Holy Bible clenched between his teeth. But I had no desire to get into a slanging match with the city of Los Angeles, in my mind, and so turned my mind to the problem at hand, the long-range plan.

I WAS considering the long-range plan, pressing upon me in all its immensity, the five-hundred-and-seventy-six-million-dollar long-range plan for which I have been repeatedly criticized by my associates and by their associates and, who knows, by associates of the associates of my associates, with particular reference to the vast underground parking facility, when my mother telephoned to ask what the left-hand page of a book is called. My mother often calls me at two o'clock in the morning because she has trouble sleeping. "Recto," I said, "it's either recto or verso, I don't remember which is which, you can look it up, how are you?" My mother said that she was fine except for horrible nightmares when she did manage to get to sleep, horrible nightmares on those rare occasions when she did manage to get to sleep, horrible nightmares in-



"We are gathered here to join together this man and this woman in matrimony—a very serious step, with far-reaching and unpredictable consequences."

• •

volving the long-range plan. I had taken the five-hundred-and-seventy-six-million-dollar long-range plan home to show to my mother some months previously, she studied the many-hundred-page printout with care and then announced that, very probably, it would give her nightmares. My mother is a disciple of Schumacher, the "small" man, a disciple of Mumford, a disciple (moving backward in time) of Fourier, and a disciple most recently of François Mitterrand, she wonders why we can't have a President like that, a real Socialist who also speaks excellent French. My mother is somewhat out of touch with present realities and feels that property is theft and feels that my father taught me the wrong things (although I feel that much of what my father taught me, in his quite bold and dramatic way, his quite bold and dramatic and let it be acknowledged self-dramatizing way, was of great use to me later—the épée, the leveraged buyout, Chapter 11—although had he really loved me he would have placed more stress, perhaps, on air-conditioning, the manufacture, sale, installation, and maintenance of air-conditioning). My problem with the long-range plan was not ethical, like my mother's, but practical: Why am I doing this?

It is not easy, it is not the easiest thing, to go through life asking this sort of question, this sort of poignant and noxious question that poisons and makes poignant (I detest poignancy!) one's every can of chicken noodle soup or cup of Spiced Cider Mix, afflicting equally morning, noon, and night (I sleep no better than my mother does), infecting calm seriousness and fevering the cash flow. *For America*, I say to myself, *for America*, and that works sometimes but sometimes it does not; *for America* is better than *because I can* and not as good, not as sweetly persuasive, as *movement of historical forces* which is itself less convincing than either *what else?* or *why not?* Where in this, I ask myself, where in all this "construction" (and the vast underground parking facility alone will extend from here to St. Louis, or very near), where in all this is the (and we do not fail to notice, do not fail to notice, the constructive associations clustering about the word "construction," the hugely affirmative and congratulatory overtones clinging like busy rust to the word "construction") answer to the question, Why am I doing this?

What else? Why not?

There remained the mystery of Helen, whose moods, her aggressive moods, her fearful moods, her desirous moods, her celebratory, resentful, and temporizing moods, remained to be plumbed, thoroughly plumbed. Thoroughness is the key to avoidance of noxious and life-ruining questions, perplexing, noxious, and life-ruining questions which threaten the delicate principle, construction. Construction is like a little boy growing up or an old man winding down or a middle-aged man floundering in the soup, where not infrequently I find that boiling lobster, myself. The spread (margarine, disease) of the physical surround can be like a spill of mixed motives or like an irruption of the divine (New Jerusalem, vast underground parking facility) or like decay in the sense of spoilation of an existing unshrubbed unbuilt swamp or Eden, these are the three categories under which construction may be subsumed, the word "subsumed" itself sounds like a soil test. But if one spends (and on the word "spends" I wish to dwell not at all) one's time thinking about these issues one loosens one's grasp on other issues, bond issues, for example, on leverage and the honest use of materials and density and building codes which vary fearfully from locality to locality and tax wrinkles and the golden section and 1% for art and 100% locations and cul-de-sacs and the Wiener Werkstätte and seals-and-cladding and fast skinning and cure of paints and the bevelling of glass and how to clinch a nail and how to sleep well, at night, in the vast *marché aux puces* of my calling. . . .

The next day, pausing only to instruct my secretary, Rip, to throw our messenger business to Hubie the former cabdriver, who had given me his card, I flew back to Los Angeles to begin understanding the mystery of Helen.

—DONALD BARTHELME

ALLOWANCE

OF the six Vincent children trapped inside Colonus Cottage at the Pearl Bay Hotel in Bermuda, Gus Vincent, aged ten, was displaying the most extreme signs of cabin fever. He snapped a towel at the lampshade, at the wastebasket with the soldiers marching across it, at his younger brother Sherman. Sherman, who was on the floor playing the millionth game of Go Fish with Chicky, told Gus to quit it, but Gus didn't stop, and finally Caitlin, writing postcards at the breakfast table, said, "Gus, I'm warning you," without looking up, which caused Gus to slink to the other side of the room, where he flicked at a pillow, furtively, and then glanced back at Caitlin. She was scribbling, her mouth was set. Behind her, the rain, which had not stopped all day, drummed down on a metal table out on the terrace. Gus turned away and cuffed the back of a wicker chair.

"You're giving me a mental heart attack," Delilah said. She had her leg draped over an armrest and was bobbing it around.

"What am I doing?" Gus said.

"Just everything," Delilah said. She shook a brittle seedpod and examined it with boredom.

"You're acting like you need a lobotomy," Sophie said. The book in her lap was open, but she was not reading.

"What's a lobotomy?" Sherman asked. He had on his Roman-gladiator shield, which helped fight off the dragons at naptime.

"It's when they cut out part of your brain and turn you into a vegetable."

"Gross," Caitlin said. She was fourteen, the oldest.

"For some mental cases it's the only thing that makes them calm down," Sophie said straight to Gus.

"What am I doing?" Gus said. Gus was usually the quietest one, drinking his milk at supper while everyone else tried to monopolize the conversation. When they put on plays, the girls took over the main parts—the queen, the princess, the witch—and Gus would be the guard or the messenger or the guy who gets killed. Sherman and Chicky, the two youngest, were the audience—one that got up and wandered away before the play was over. But since the Vincents had gotten to Bermuda, Gus had not been able to sit still. It was the first real vacation they'd been on, as opposed to going to just New Hampshire or Vermont to ski. Bermuda had been Mum's idea. Other families from Marshport, the small town in Massachusetts where they lived, had houses there that Mum wanted to see. Before, there had always been too many monkeys, but now that Chicky was six they were manageable. Gus was the oldest boy, the first boy after three girls, and was named after Dad.

Things were different in Bermuda. The grass was scratchy and rough, not at all like the grass at home, and the air had a thickness that made your bones feel loose. Stepping into the coral caves was like entering a seashell, with a low wind rushing and the echo of water slaps. Rays wheeled by through the pleated shallows on strange rubber wings, and green lizards, like elongated stars, appeared stuck onto the white walls inside the cottage. Gus claimed he saw a hunchbacked animal on the golf course one night; it was a laughing hyena, he said, with yellow eyes and striped fur. No one but the little boys believed him.

"I think one of those ticks got into your brain," Delilah said.

"What," Gus said.

Delilah sighed. "The ticks you got, Gus."

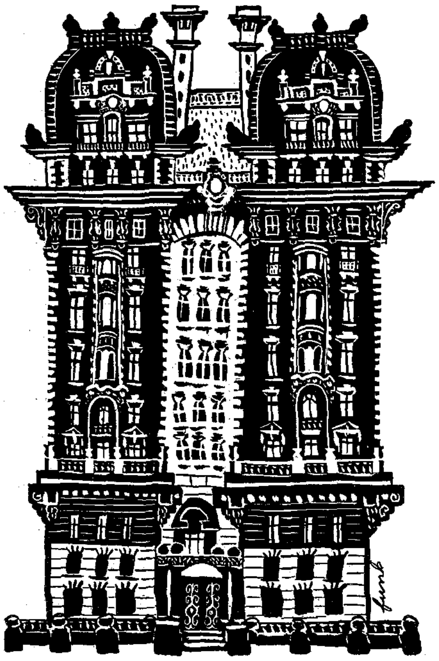
"Mum took them off," Sherman said.

"I know," Delilah said. "But when they hatch eggs under your skin, they can get anywhere."

"Mum flushed those down the toilet," Gus said.

"That won't even kill them," Sophie said. "You have to burn them."

"Even if they were this tiny?" Sherman said. He put his fingertips together and made a little space.



"It doesn't matter their size," Sophie said.

"We *do* have ticks at home," Caitlin said.

"Well," Delilah said, "they're different from the ones here."

Gus was standing at the window. The fairway was soaked to a dark green, lined with spiky palms, ending at a cloudy smudge that was the ocean. "Lots of things are different here," he said.

"Gus already wants to go home," Delilah said.

"I do not."

"Well, he better like it here," Caitlin said. "It's costing a hundred dollars a day."

The door at the far end of the room opened and everyone stopped talking. Their mother, freckled and handsome, came out in a bathrobe—something she'd never be wearing at home.

"Mum," Caitlin said. "Tell Gus to calm down."

Mum glanced into a corner. "Where are the little boys?" she asked vaguely. Everyone looked at her; you never saw Mum lost in thought this way.

"Right here," came Sherman's voice from behind the couch.

Mum nodded and drifted over to the mantelpiece as if trying to remember something. One of her eyebrows went up dreamily. She folded her arms. Then she remembered; she looked up. But no. . . . It was something else. . . . She frowned. Then came a weird grimace, and her skin cracked like rice paper, and she burst into tears.

Everyone froze. Delilah's leg went still. Sherman's head rose like a periscope from behind the couch.

"It's Dad," Mum said. "He—" Her eyes were shiny with visions.

Gus stepped forward. "What about him?" His bottom lip was red and eager with spit, his teeth working at it.

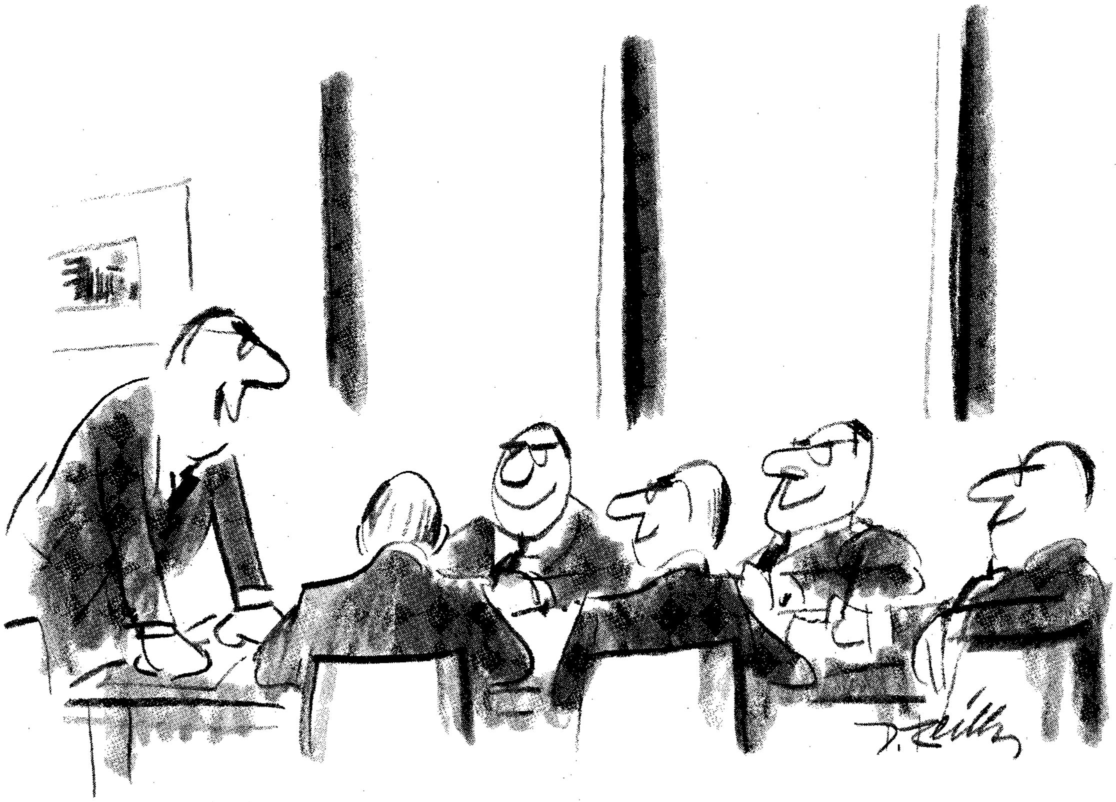
"He thinks—" But she couldn't go on and was overtaken by little sobs and jumpy breaths. They all waited, stunned.

"What?" Gus said.

"No," Mum said, ashamed. "It's O.K. It's just things at the bank, and he thinks . . ." This hurt, and she winced.

"Do you want to go home?" Caitlin said gently. Her pen was clutched in its writing angle, her brow creased. "We can, you know."

Sophie and Delilah were both nodding. They knew it must be serious if



"It's been moved and seconded, then, that we are greater than the sum of the individual parts."

• •

Dad mentioned the bank. He never mentioned work.

Mum began a weak smile and sniffed. "No, no," she said, and looked at them fondly. It was like the end of church, when the priest says, "The Mass is ended; go in peace." They all began to stir, to help it end quickly.

Caitlin went over to her. "Don't you worry about it, love," Mum said, her voice composed and assured again. She began to rub Caitlin's back.

On the floor were towels the boys had left lying around. As Mum picked them up, Gus stole glances at the opening of her bathrobe. Straightening, she flipped back her hair in a familiar gesture—being efficient, back to her usual business of cleaning up after the boys. Before going back to her and Dad's room, she turned and whispered to the children, playfully, meaning that this wasn't so serious after all. "Let's just not bother him too much," she said, and wrinkled her nose.

BEFORE dinner, the girls huddled behind the cottage, out of sight. They had gotten the cigarettes from Dad's carton, which, along with the gallon of bourbon, went with him wherever he went. The carton and the bottle sat on the bureau next to Mum's jewelry pouch—the velvet one that zipped in pearls and dangly earrings. The bottle of bourbon was even at the hospital when Dad had his appendix out; Mum had snuck it in under her raincoat.

Caitlin took a loud puff. "I *thought* Dad was acting weird this morning," she said. Sophie nodded.

"He was not," Delilah said, watching her sisters practice smoke rings. Delilah was only eleven and didn't smoke yet.

Dad had come out of his room slapping his putter like a riding crop. "Morning, all," he said. "Satisfactory breakfast?" Everyone nodded and hummed. "Want some?" Caitlin asked, holding out her muffin with marmalade on it. Dad had shaken his head and bent over to putt. They all watched. He brought back the putter, swung it through, making a *tlock* sound with his tongue, and, bending his knees and slightly twisted, posed as still as a statue. Around the breakfast table there was a gentle craning of necks as the invisible ball rolled over the straw carpet. When Dad unfroze, it meant the ball had stopped, so they could stop paying attention. He frowned, unhappy with the stroke. But Dad never looked satisfied with anything he did.

Above the girls, by the cottage's back door, an electric grid zapped insects in a quick, blue flash. "Gus beat him yesterday at golf, you know," Sophie said.

"That's impossible," Delilah said. She pulled her dress over her knees and rocked.

"Dad doesn't like vacations anyway," Caitlin said.

"He does so," Delilah said. Dad took off two weeks each year. Mum said the bank would give him more if he asked, but he never did.

"Does it really cost that much, Caitlin?" Sophie asked.

Caitlin tapped her ash and nodded gravely. She knew about these things. Looks of concern passed over her sisters' faces: how much of this whole thing was being done just for them?

"You're always making a big deal out of everything," Delilah said.

"I am not," Caitlin said. "How would you like it—spending all your money on other people?"

"I'm not a father," Delilah said. She began brushing off a flagstone. "Besides, you're the one charging ginger ales in the game room."

"Once."

"Still." Delilah waved away some smoke with a sour face. "Anyway, why don't you use your own money?"

"I would," Caitlin said. "If Dad would just give us a regular allowance."

"He gives you money whenever you ask him," Sophie said.

"Right," Caitlin said with a knowing look. "*You* ask him."

"We're not meant to bother him," Delilah said.

Caitlin and Sophie both rolled their eyes. "Thanks, Delilah," they said. "Thanks for the information."

FOR dinner that night they had green soup. Dad sat at the head; they were careful not to look straight at him. They snuck glances—he had a funny expression, blinking behind his glasses, as if trying to stay awake.

"Is this turtle soup?" Sherman asked. They had the biggest table in the dining room, and they took the same seats each night, the way they did at home.

"No," Mum said. "It's pea—even better than turtle."

"I bet I wouldn't like turtle," Sherman said.

"Everyone has to try it," Mum said.

"What if you hate peas?" Delilah said.

"Look," Mum said. "Dad likes it." It was O.K. to look at Dad now. He was one inch from the bowl, and his mouth was fumbling over his spoon. "Yoo-hoo," Mum called.

It woke him. Dad glanced around the table. Perplexed, he saw six children, six hopeful faces looking back at him, and down at the other end a woman in a pink dress—what did they want? He stood and excused himself.

"Where's he going?" Gus asked.

Mum shrugged flirtatiously: that was a secret. She sipped her soup as if it were the best thing she'd ever tasted. She didn't seem to be so worried about Dad anymore.

Dad came back and sat down. He had a new drink, one with white onions rolling around at the bottom.

After the soup bowls were taken away, plates were put down with roast beef and potatoes on them. The waiter was the same waiter they'd had every night—an old, pale man with white hair who looked like their priest at home, Father Florie. That made it seem funny for him to be a waiter. He seemed wise.

"There's so much fat on it," Sherman said. Mum went, "Ahem."

"That's the best part," Gus said. It was what Dad always said—that it was his favorite part. Gus went along with Dad's taste, down to the radishes Dad ate before dinner. Though the way Gus chewed showed that he didn't really like them.

"I think we should all give Dad a big thank-you for the vacation," Mum said.

They did, in unison. Dad nodded abruptly. Everyone went busily to the plates.

A sound came from Dad.

"You O.K.?" Mum asked.

Dad pulled at his collar, frowning. A tie was something he wouldn't usually have on for dinner. "Hot in here," he muttered.

Mum said why didn't he have some water.

Dad tapped his empty glass and the waiter came over. After he poured water for Dad, he surveyed the table to make sure everyone was taken care of, smiled personally at Chicky, and went away.

Dad picked up his glass, lifted it over his head, and turned it upside down. The water came splashing off his forehead, running down and dribbling onto his shoulders. "There," he said with drops on his earlobes. "Much better."

Sherman started to smile, then saw from everyone else's face that this was not funny.

They looked at Mum. Down at her end of the table, she was doing something with her glass of water. She dipped her fingers into it as if into holy water, but, instead of crossing herself, absent-mindedly, the way she did when arriving late for church, she very purposefully dabbed the water around her neck like perfume. She turned to Chicky beside her and smiled at him, hard. "Much better is right,"

"My wife likes saxophones."

FIRST DAY OF THE FUTURE

They always seem to come up
on the future, these cold, earthly dawns;
the whiteness and the blackness
make the flesh shiver, as though starting to break.
But that is always just an illusion,
always it is just another day they illuminate
of the permanent present. Except for today.
A motorboat sets out across the bay,
a transfiguring spirit, all those little puffy gasps
of disintegration collected
and anthemed out in a pure purr of dominion.
It disappears. In the stillness again,
the shore lights remember the dimensions of the black water.
I don't know about this new life.
Though I burned the ashes of its flag again and again,
and set fire to the ticket that might have conscripted me into its fighting ranks forever,
though I squandered all my talents composing my emigration papers, I think I want to go back now,
and live again in the present time: back there
where someone milks a cow and jets of intensest nourishment go singing into a pail,
where someone is hammering, a bit of steel on the end of a stick hitting a bit of steel, in the archaic stillness of a summer afternoon,
or somebody else saws a board, back and forth, like hard labor in the lungs of one who refuses to come to the very end.
But I guess I'm here. So I must take care. For here,
one has to keep facing the right way, or one sees one dies, and one dies.
I'm not sure I'm going to like it living in the future.
I don't think I can keep on doing it indefinitely.

—Galway Kinnell

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she said, and she folded her arms, slumped down on her elbows, and sighed as if she were relieved, though she wasn't—her eyes were furious. She was refusing to look at Dad.

Caitlin said, "Something's the matter with Gus." She pushed back her chair and rushed over to him. Gus was sitting there, not making a sound, but his face was red and getting redder, and his eyes were round and terrified. When Gus was small, he used to cry so hard he'd faint. The girls had been taught to say "Breathe, Gus, breathe" as his face was going purple. Eventually, he'd pass out and keel over. Mum called him Goatie, after the baby goats that fainted from fear, going stiff and falling over when you chased them. But Gus wasn't crying now.

"What's the matter?" Delilah said angrily.

"He's choking," Sophie said. Gus looked as if he'd been tattled on. His chest started to heave and a cough threatened to escape, but he stifled it.

Mum shot out of her chair and was beside him. "Spit it out," she ordered. She thumped his back. Gus kept holding whatever it was down. A huge vein appeared on his forehead.

Caitlin screamed, "Spit it out, Gus!"

"Mum's doing it," Sophie said, and tried to pull her back to her chair.

"Not very well," Caitlin said fiercely.

The table was in an uproar. Sophie said, "Gus, try coughing," and Caitlin said, "Will everybody stop yelling?," as Sherman was saying, "Why doesn't he just swallow it?"

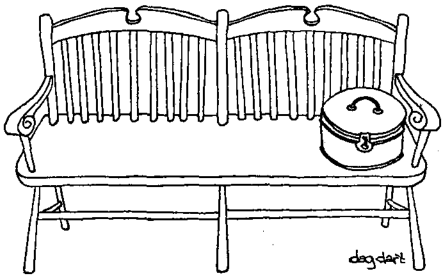
"Because, Sherman," said Delilah, "he can't."

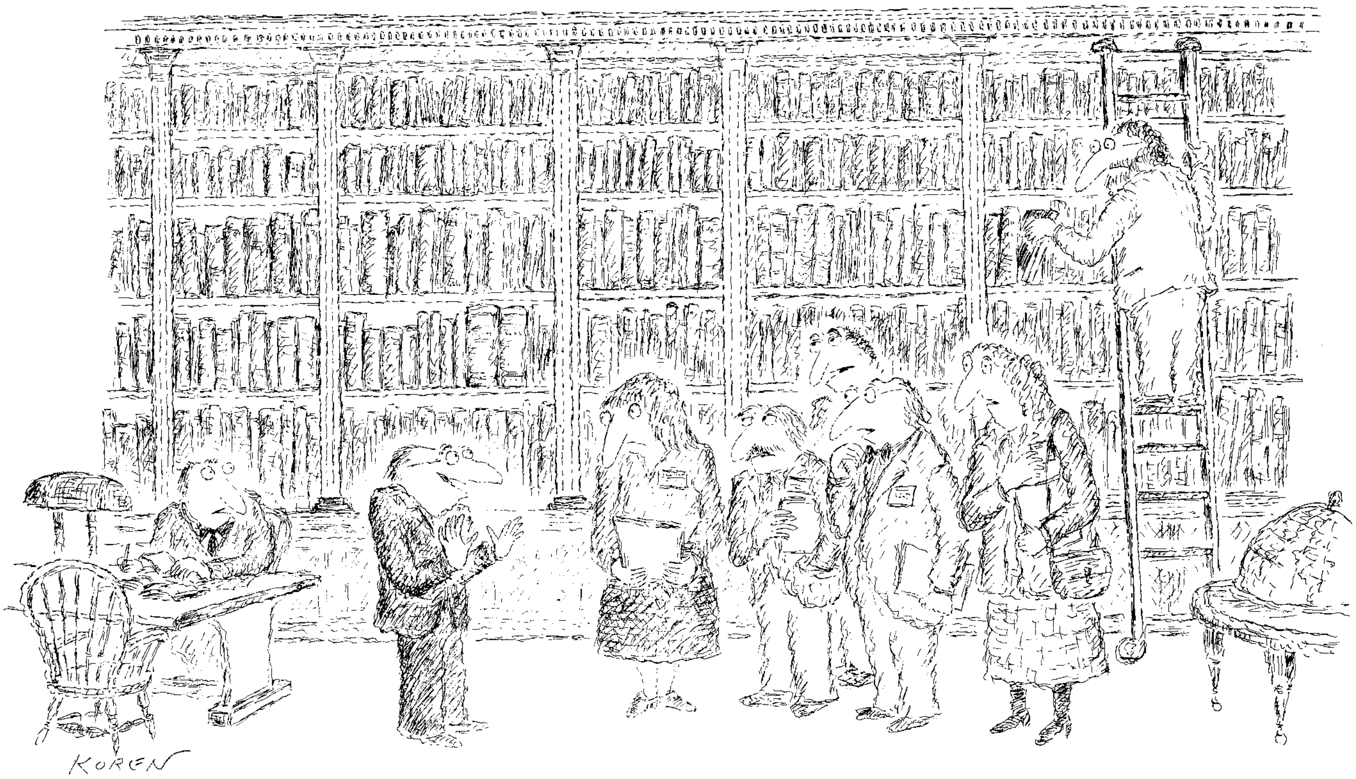
The waiter appeared. He hurried over to Gus and lifted him out of his chair. Taking hold of his ankles, he turned him upside down and shook him with short jerks—the kind one might use on a clogged shaker of salt or a temperamental fountain pen—and this worked.

MOST of the time they spent at the beach. The boys ran around throwing balls, climbing rocks. Gus kept his eyes on the top of a driftwood stick and did spins, turning around and around. "Watch, Dad!" he cried. "Watch me!" Then he'd topple over. Dad sat behind the girls in a rickety chair he'd found on the beach, wearing sneakers and socks. "No balls in the house," he called when Caitlin got beaned by an overthrow. They lined up for pictures. "Attention!" Dad would shout, and they scurried around, arranging themselves in order: Caitlin Sophie Delilah Gus Sherman Chicky, their palms flat against their sides, chins pulled in. When Dad said, "At ease," it meant they should put one foot to the side, clasp their wrists behind their backs, and do a little sway.

Ice-cream men strolled the beach, bumping aluminum coolers against their hips. The boys met in a huddle and planned a strategy. Chicky got sent on the mission to Dad. Gus and Sherman watched Dad shift in his chair, going for his back pocket, and saw Chicky take a bill and then glance back at his brothers, waiting in the distance. Chicky said something else to Dad, and Dad handed him another bill and immediately tucked his wallet back under his seat. Chicky came running back, kicking up sand, and handed the money to Gus, who ordered for them: one Rocket, one Rainbow Delight, and a sundae cup. When the girls, flat out on their towels, started asking for bites, Gus turned to Mum with a tortured face, meaning "Can't they get their own?" Dad was already hitching into his back pocket. Sophie and Delilah took the dollars—stiff as sandpaper—asking Dad did he want something. He shook his head. A drink even? No, he didn't, thank you. Mum called out that she wouldn't mind one of those banana Popsicles. The one she'd had yesterday had really hit the spot.

THEY visited the fort, a plateau of levelled ruins with grass blowing and rubble. Gus wanted to know where all the men were; he had a fort at home, with cavalry. "Where indeed," Dad said, pacing off a boundary with stiff knees. "Where indeed."





"Please! Pardon the dangling participle."

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"Away from the edge," Mum called casually.

Dad whipped around. Sherman was peering down the cliff, where coral islands were humped like haystacks in the sea. "Obey your mother!" Dad shouted.

To Dad, everything was dangerous. The roads here were death traps, he said. They saw a lot of accidents—policemen waving traffic by, and hollow helmets lying in the road. They would have rented a car, but it wasn't worth it. Gus and the girls rode bicycles—better exercise anyway, Mum said—while Chicky and Sherman rode with Mum and Dad on their motorbikes. Serene and bug-headed in their helmets, they glided by Gus and the girls, who had to pedal furiously before every hill. "So long, suckers," Sherman said, puttering past, gloating, sitting behind Dad, whose attention remained fixed on points farther along the road.

IT was on one of the last days that Dad's wallet disappeared. "Attention, everybody," Mum said. "Major hunt."

"Where'd he have it last?" Sophie asked. Dad was in his room with the door shut.

"Can't remember," Mum said. She was down on her hands and knees, checking under a bamboo bookshelf.

Caitlin, who had her towel and her bag, all ready for the beach, said, "Maybe it got stolen."

"Everybody look," Mum said. Sometimes there were rewards; you found Mum's scissors or the missing glove and got a reward for it.

"Just say a prayer to St. Anthony," Delilah said. This had always worked for her.

They searched about listlessly, picking up cushions and dropping them, opening drawers with nothing inside. The boys tripped out onto the terrace, pushing each other, and when Sherman and Chicky came back in they gave huge sighs—the search would never end.

Then they heard a cry from outside. Everyone turned to see Gus appear in the doorway, his face showing wavering surprise. His palm was thrust forward, lifted up, and on it he had the wallet. "I found it in the bushes," he said uncertainly.

Mum watched him. "Yes," she said. "Here." Gus stared at the wallet, not at Mum, as she took it. When Dad came out of his room, the whole family was assembled.

"The Goatie came up with it," Mum said.

Dad took the wallet and opened it. It was brown leather, warped in the shape of his back pocket. He began to count the bills, separating them one at a time with his thumb. He had a funny expression, Dad did, his eyebrows with that lift you see on people who have been hypnotized, or on daydreamers.

"So everything's O.K.?" Gus said. Mum was plumping some pillows, holding her chin the way she did when someone was about to take her picture, composing herself. "Do I get a reward?" he asked. Dad didn't respond. Gus tried to smile and, swaggering, turned toward his brothers and sisters. All their eyes were on him, and all watched his expression change, withering into panic, as if he thought that at any moment they would pounce on him.

It wasn't that. They just knew what he'd done. —SUSAN MINOT

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A Cabinet struggle is taking place over plans to reform the welfare state. Nigel Lawson, the chancellor of the exchequer, is pushing for a benefits shake-up which will shave billions off the £38 million cost of social security.—*London Sunday Times.*

Are you listening, Stockman?

ANNALS OF FINANCE

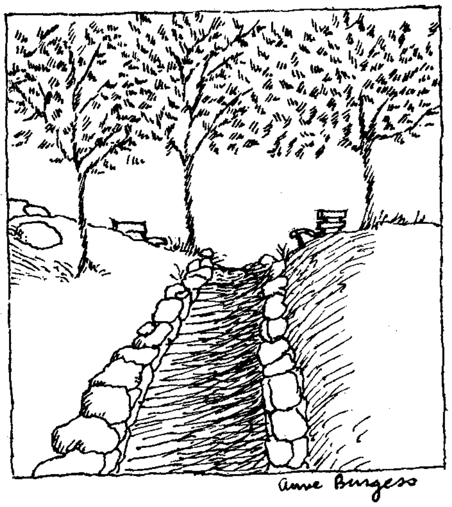
FUNNY MONEY—II

EVEN better than Robert A. Hefner III comprehended the confounding geology of the Anadarko Basin—a huge reservoir of oil and natural gas that lies beneath the surface of southwestern Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle—he comprehended the value of debtor's leverage: the notion that someone who owes a banker a hundred thousand dollars he can't pay back has more reason to lie awake nights than someone who owes ten million. Owe a hundred thousand, the theory goes, and the bank controls you; owe ten million and you control the bank. Bankers prefer to avoid either of these circumstances. During the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, Hefner, a geologist who was then in his thirties, tirelessly pursued investors who might be willing to underwrite his ambition to explore the Anadarko's depths. It was the Anadarko's deep deposits of methane—natural gas—rather than its oil reserves that aroused Hefner. Because the federal regulation of interstate natural-gas pipelines kept the price of methane artificially low in relation to the price of crude oil, most of the bankers whom Hefner approached—regardless of whether they shared his vision of the Anadarko's deep-gas potential—declined to lend him anything. This led him to cultivate surrogate bankers.

In 1977, Hefner first borrowed from the Penn Square Bank, a burgeoning oil-and-gas-lending institution in Oklahoma City. By that point, Hefner and an ostensibly moneyed partner, a New York City businessman named David O'D. Kennedy, had run up a debt to the Northern Illinois Gas Company, or NIGAS, of more than fifteen million dollars. NIGAS, which was a public utility company, had become a commercial lender inadvertently when, in the mid-nineteen-sixties, it lent three million dollars to the GHK Company, the primary Hefner-Kennedy partnership. Kennedy also owed Manufacturers Hanover Trust three and a half million dollars—an obligation that was the oldest classified, or substandard, loan on that bank's books. The GHK Company had annual oil-and-gas income in 1977 of roughly seven hundred thousand dollars. This amount did not suffice to meet interest payments, much less retire any of the principal or defray the company's expenses, such as overhead, salaries, and mineral-lease renewals. Nor could it easily sustain Hefner's personal habits, which included polo in Palm Beach and Palm Springs, sailing off Antigua, grouse shooting in the Cotswolds, and wintering in Cancún.

The Hefner methodology was audacious, maddening, and irrepressible. When Hefner first set out to buy mineral leases in the Anadarko Basin, leases ran ten years and bonuses—the amount that a mineral owner received when he leased his property—ran from ten to twenty-five dollars an acre. You could not hold the acreage forever unless you drilled wells and discovered the natural gas that Hefner was convinced could be found in awesome quantities three or five or more miles deep into the Basin. To do that, capitalists with tangible capital were required. Hefner negotiated complicated partnership agreements in an effort to accumulate oil-and-gas production while risking very little cash of his own. He manipulated most of the natural human virtues and vices, paying special attention to good will and cupidity. No one who ever sat through a Hefner sales presentation—which was less a pitch than a multimedia adaptation of the Book of Revelation—doubted his abilities as a promoter. The man believed in his product. Meeting a prospective buyer, he would trot out seismic charts, structural maps, wire-line logs, magnetic and gravimetric surveys, satellite photos. When he was done, he would exit stage-whispering, "This is too good to sell. We've got to keep it all!"

Working with mirrors, Hefner was running a glorified lease-brokerage enterprise that appeared to be one of the most daring exploration companies on earth. Survival hinged on his ability to buy leases cheap with borrowed money; to sell part of the acreage to exploration companies that had the resources to drill expensive deep wells; to use lease-trading profits to participate in the wells; and, above all, to become the operator—in effect, the general contractor—during the drilling and afterward. As an operator, GHK would bill its partners each month for their share of drilling and other costs. Dollars are dollars are dollars. Before redistributing his partners' money to subcontractors, Hefner would do with it whatever he could. He paid annual mineral rentals, he paid for seismic surveys of new prospects, he paid leftover debts from his previous deals. He stalled his most recent creditors, and he tested his partners' patience.



When NIGAS agreed to finance GHK's effort to acquire Anadarko leases, it did so because the company's executives subscribed to Hefner's basic geological theories and because if the methane could be produced in the quantities that Hefner predicted NIGAS would have an inside track on the supply. Indeed, some elements of the plan worked out. Methane from the No. 1 Green, GHK's seminal deep Anadarko producer, completed in 1969, warmed hearths in Chicago. The hitch was that a winter in Chicago could get insufferably cold and, no matter, the No. 1 Green, flowing methane at the government-controlled price of twenty-two cents per thousand cubic feet, would always be a fiscal fiasco. The next challenge was to come up with a project that, even more than the No. 1 Green, could make a banker blanch. Hefner succeeded in 1971, with a deep well called the Farrar. He did not achieve this all by himself; David Kennedy also participated—but that was it, just the two of them. At twenty-two thousand four hundred and eight feet, the Farrar was the deepest well ever drilled "straight up"—that is, with a single party assuming the entire risk. It cost three and a half million dollars, in return for which GHK discovered between eight and ten billion cubic feet of reserves. This enterprise was as economically disappointing as the No. 1 Green.

NIGAS was left with little practical choice but to roll over the GHK debt. It did this not with the blithe optimism

PLAYBILL
Modell

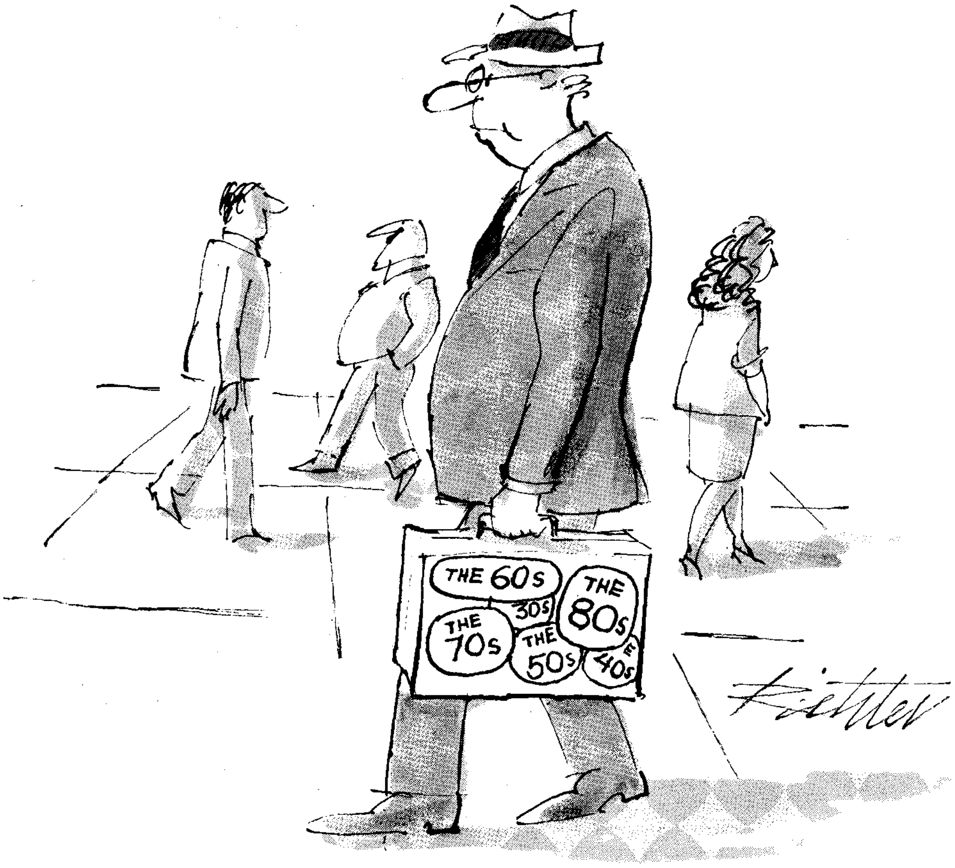
"I never said it wasn't good. I merely said I hated it."

that later made Bill Patterson, the head of the Penn Square Bank's oil-and-gas-lending department, and Bill P. (Beep) Jennings, the bank's chairman of the board, so popular but with the cynicism of an unwitting venture capitalist. Most of the mushrooming wad that GHK owed NIGAS was interest that had accumulated on the original debt. In the beginning, Hefner's bargaining strengths had been his pervasive knowledge of the Anadarko Basin and his foresight in having amassed large blocks of acreage. As time went on, those became secondary to his debtor's leverage. But the lender had some leverage as well. NIGAS believed in the moral correctness of quid pro quo. Each time the utility company renewed a note, its overseers grabbed another piece of GHK's title to the Anadarko, usually in the form of overriding royalty interests. Little things like paying bills might not have concerned Hefner, but losing acreage made him feel as if someone were slicing up his heart. The urge to get out there in the Basin and reclaim his stake forced Hefner into perpetual motion. It also forced him to refine his promotional skills.

In 1970, 1971, and 1977, Hefner negotiated significant deals with the Lone Star Gas Company, the El Paso Natural Gas Company, and the Apache Corporation, respectively. At their peak, his leaseholdings amounted to roughly two hundred thousand acres. Most of this existed within a hundred-square-mile area surrounding Elk City, a town that was destined to become the unofficial capital of the Anadarko Basin, and the major lease parcels were known collectively as the Elk City Project Area. Each time Hefner traded a portion of his interest in the Elk City Project, he received a commitment from a larger company to spend a certain amount of money drilling a certain number of wells. Although Hefner's motives never changed, the results varied. Almost immediately, the El Paso transaction began to work out nicely for both sides. The Apache exploration program produced certain disappointments—things like dry holes—but it might, in the long run, prove worthwhile to Apache. Then, there was Lone Star.

Some people who have observed Hefner closely across the years regard the Lone Star deal as a paradigm of his modus operandi—his relentless effort to pay past dues by taking another deep plunge. In this instance, GHK received from Lone Star seven million dollars in cash, plus a pledge to spend at least ten million dollars drilling two ultra-deep wells. Although GHK was expected to pay only a quarter of the drilling costs, according to the terms of the deal it would own a half interest in the completed wells. Lone Star did not anticipate, however, that Hefner would be using the brand-new seven million dollars to pay some stale old debts, after which GHK would have very little left to pay its share of the drilling costs. When this complication became apparent, it disturbed the Lone Star Gas Company more than it disturbed Bob Hefner.

The first Lone Star well, the No. 1 Baden, was completed in 1972. It was the deepest hole in the world drilled for hydrocarbons. When the second well, the Bertha Rogers, was completed, in 1974, *it* became the deepest hole in the world drilled for hydrocarbons. Together, they ultimately cost not ten million dollars but fifteen. Each well pierced zones below thirty thousand feet, and each ended up producing uneconomical amounts of gas from zones much shallower than the target depths. By the time the Bertha Rogers was drilled, Hefner had been forced to trade additional acreage to Lone Star. Instead of owning half of that well, he wound up with a negligible interest. Nevertheless, he was willing to exploit the "success" of the Bertha Rogers, which had revealed traces of methane and ethane at thirty-one thousand four hundred and forty-one feet; he later cited this as evidence that natural gas pervaded the greatest depths of the Anadarko Basin. The Bertha Rogers literally discovered Ordovician hellfire and brimstone—satanic vapors and molten sulfur. The pressure at the bottom of the hole was



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twenty-seven thousand pounds per square inch, and the temperature was almost five hundred degrees. Brine in the well's drilling fluid reacted with hydrogen-sulfide gas to produce sulfuric acid, which corroded the drilling pipe, rendering it uselessly brittle. Rock cuttings impregnated with sulfur crystals circulated to the surface along with the drilling fluid. Hefner retrieved some of this material and put it in a small linen bag, which he inscribed "Man's deepest penetration of inner space." Then he donated the bag to "21," in New York, on the theory, presumably, that it couldn't hurt.

At this rate, God was not going to permit Bob Hefner to drill his way to glory. The experiences of the Farrar and the Baden and the Bertha Rogers had a depressing effect not only upon GHK and the Lone Star Gas Company but upon the Anadarko Basin as a whole. The self-generating Hefner mythology increasingly bore an odd resemblance to a fairy tale: white knight versus fire-breathing dragon. Metaphor and reality had begun to overlap, and the dragon had built a huge lead.

Hefner needed fresh credibility. He needed a much bigger accomplice than he had ever promoted before—a world-power government, say. Thoughts similar to this had occurred to him in the past. In 1969, he had campaigned for fourteen-hundred-and-forty-acre well-spacing units in the western Anadarko region. The typical spacing unit for gas wells in Oklahoma, set by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, is one square mile—six hundred and forty acres—although, depending on the field, the units can run as small as forty acres. Hefner's argument to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission was that, with deep wells costing so much to drill and interstate gas selling at such a low price, a producer needed to drain more acreage per well to make a profit. Many mineral owners initially opposed fourteen-hundred-and-forty-acre spacing, but Hefner prevailed. The *federales* were whom Hefner really needed to agree with him, and they were not as easily impressed as the Oklahoma Corporation Commissioners. In 1970, Hefner had testified before the Federal Power Commission, declaring that "there is a national shortage of natural gas" and that to increase reserves you had to drill deeper. Across the next few years, he turned up in Washington whenever the F.P.C. held rate-setting hearings. A routine evolved. Hefner would deliver the most recent edition of his basic sermon, and the F.P.C. would respond, in effect, "Yeah, we think the deep gas is probably there. We know it's expensive to drill the wells. We know you're in a bind. But we're not completely convinced. Go drill some more."

Democracy in action was not cheap, but it cost less than drilling deep, dragonlike dry holes. It was cheaper to petition, pray, dilate, and expostulate. Hefner organized a little club called the Independent Gas Producers Committee and introduced himself on Capitol Hill as its delegate. The Independent Gas Producers Committee hired lawyers and lobbyists. Hefner testified before the Senate Interior Committee, the Senate Commerce Committee, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources—any congressional committee or subcommittee that would have him. He launched position papers written in a hybrid of Washingtonese and Hefnerese, he issued reports, sent Mailgrams, dictated his thoughts, made statements, called press conferences, dispatched press releases and Q. & A.s and outlines and alternatives to Administration policies and open letters to congressmen and governors. *He italicized crucially important passages of these declamations.* He riddled them with exclamation points! Sometimes multiple exclamation points!!! He tended toward prolixity. He feared not redundancy. He came off like an obsessive-compulsive, somewhere between a bore and a madman. And, indeed, he could not help himself. During the 1976 Presidential campaign, he was chairman of Oil and Gas Men for Carter. In the spring of 1977, a reporter from the Los Angeles *Times* interviewed him. Self-restraint eluded Hefner. "If it works," he told the reporter, "maybe I'll get rich."

Not quite two years after Jimmy Carter took office, by which time Hefner had lost affection for him, the President signed the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978, at a stroke changing all the rules. One section of the new law exempted from federal price controls any newly discovered natural gas produced from below fifteen thousand feet. Free-market forces would now determine the value of the deep Anadarko. Suddenly, gas from wells such as the No. 1 Green, instead of selling for twenty-two cents per thousand cubic feet, could go for two and a half dollars—perhaps much higher. More than any other artifact, the new law gilded the mythology of Robert A.

Hefner III. Independent oil-and-gas producers, including many who were not fond of Hefner, believed that he had single-handedly drafted the provision for deep-gas deregulation. The truth was that he had feared becoming too closely identified with deep gas and had deliberately spent the last year or so of the legislative battle away from Washington. Hired lobbyists had done the legwork. Whatever Hefner's influence on the passage of the act, he could easily grasp its significance: it was as if Congress, with the acquiescence of the White House, had pointed a finger at western Oklahoma and said, "O.K. Those people right there—we'll make them rich."

In the past, even at times when GHK had a net worth that was, strictly speaking, negative, Hefner had successfully maintained the illusion of wealth. Now that great wealth seemed plausible, and even imminent, he was still strapped for cash. Early in 1978, he had gone to the Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Company, of Chicago, one of the leading oil-and-gas-lending institutions in the country, with a high-dollar request. To bolster his case, he took along a bottom-hole rock sample from a productive deep well called the No. 1 Gregory. By displaying the rock, he intended to prove that it was possible to drill a five-mile hole and encounter sediments with porosity and permeability sufficient to contain methane that would pay back any loan. By now, Hefner owned interests in about fifty producing wells. Prudent energy bankers prefer diversified collateral. Unfortunately, four-fifths of GHK's gas production flowed from three wells. Continental's petroleum engineers looked at the rock. Alvin J. (Jerry) Pearson, the vice-president in charge of Continental Illinois's oil-and-gas-lending division, who had been a practicing engineer before he became a banker, looked at the rock. "The rock's too tight," he said, meaning that hydrocarbons could not flow through it. Continental Illinois refused Hefner's loan request.

Farming out small pieces of acreage, making deals on a well-by-well basis, Hefner spent two more years maneuvering for liquidity, seeking a lender capable of major financing. At work in his favor was the rising price of deep gas—from two and a half dollars per thousand cubic feet to five dollars and then to seven-fifty. Any banker who worried that a customer's collateral might be shaky could watch the natural-gas market and breathe a sigh. Finally, in the summer of 1980, NIGAS was able to relinquish its role as Hefner's banker. With a major assist from Penn Square, Hefner closed on his first big bank loan—fifty-five million dollars from the First National Bank of Dallas. He used thirty-five million dollars to extinguish most of his debt to NIGAS, spread the leftover twenty million around in the customary manner, and realized that he needed much more money.

Within six months, Hefner was invited back to Continental Illinois, and Bill Patterson accompanied him. Jerry Pearson had resigned from the bank, and a vice-president named John Lytle managed what was now called the mid-continent-oil-and-gas-lending division. Suddenly, Continental was more than eager to do business with Hefner. The timing was not accidental. In what looked like the farmout to end all farmouts, Hefner had just promoted the Mobil Oil Corporation. Back in 1963, Hefner had tried to sell Mobil a half interest in a hundred and twenty thousand Anadarko Basin acres for nine million dollars and had been turned down. Seventeen years later, to earn a half interest in a hundred and thirty-five thousand acres of the Elk City Project Area, Mobil agreed to spend two hundred million dollars drilling for deep gas. Up front, Mobil threw in thirty-two million dollars for the GHK treasury.

As discombobulating as the numbers might sound, the Mobil agreement was just an inflated version of what Hefner had been doing all along—turning leases, latching onto big partners. Now, for the first time in Hefner's experience, Wall Street beckoned. A permanent vacation beckoned. If GHK were to sell shares to the public, Hefner and Kennedy could get out of debt forever and into, say, a hundred million, maybe two hundred million, in cash. With that, Hefner could buy tax-free municipal bonds, or groceries, or whatever he pleased. Unaccustomed as he was to solvency, he decided instead to borrow whatever the Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Company would let him have. Between January and April of 1981, this premier energy bank—a bank that in 1976 had made known its desire to become the leading commercial lender in America—negotiated with Hefner a hundred-million-dollar line of credit. There were formal discussions and informal ones. The Penn Square Bank, in the person of Bill Patterson, tagged along, with Patterson assuming the role of shuttle diplomat. He wanted to help his friend and fellow-banker John Lytle confect loan terms that would fly past his superiors. And he wanted his friend and customer Bob Hefner—the godfather of Patterson's youngest child—to be able to borrow a hundred million dollars without having to promise to restrict his future borrowing from other sources.

The bankers and Hefner agreed that he had no choice but to borrow this money. To abandon the Anadarko Basin just as its true promise was about to be revealed wouldn't have made sense. Because Hefner had always thought of himself as rich, becoming a millionaire—merely Oklahoma-rich—did not impress him. He intended to become a billionaire—world-class rich. Banking with Continental Illinois made that a possibility. If the gas that Hefner had been saying all along was there was indeed there, and if it was finally worth something, why not try to own the whole thing?

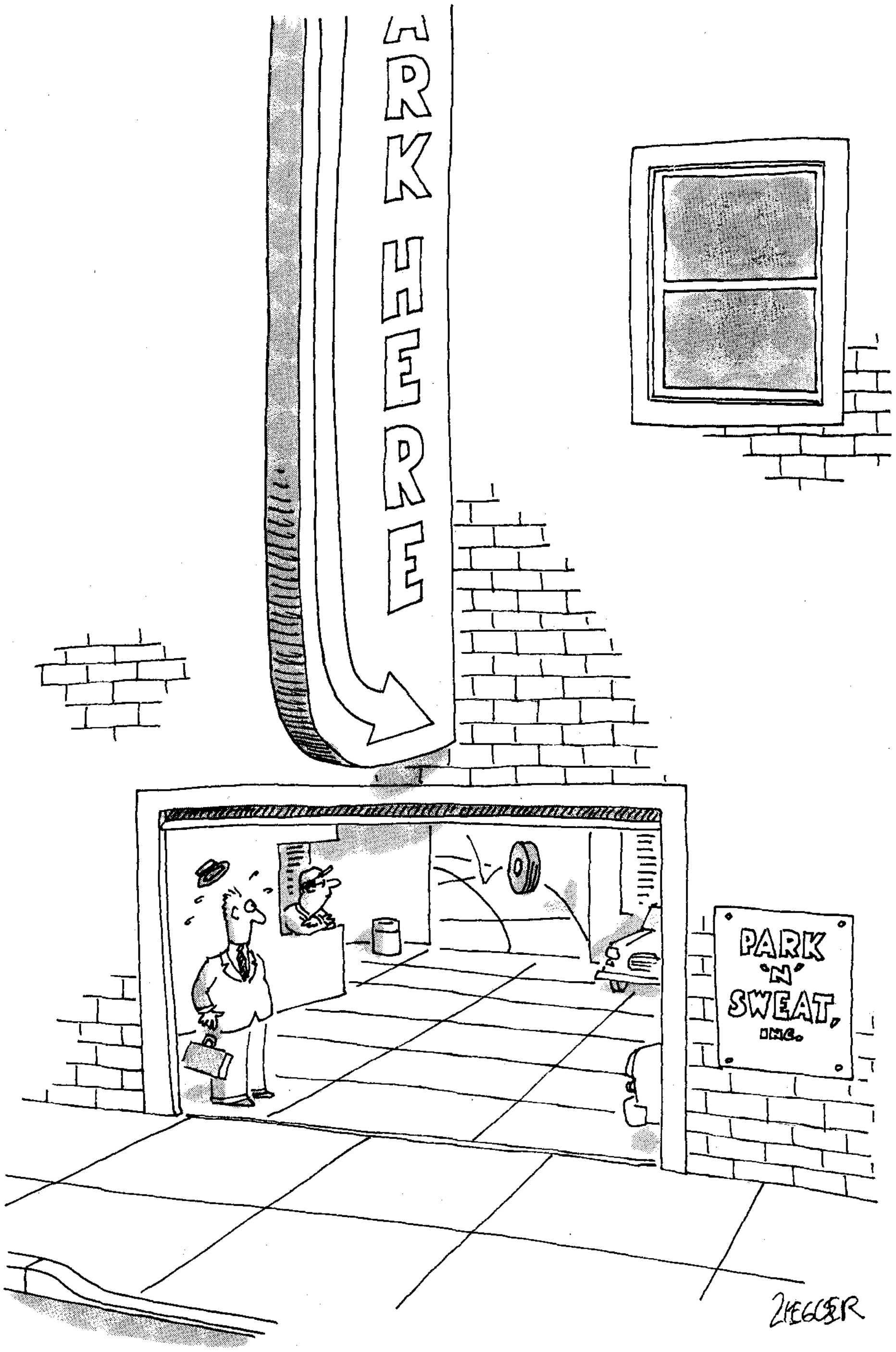
"FATHER OF THE ANADARKO BASIN" was a title that others conferred upon Hefner after he cut his quarter-of-a-billion-dollar deal with Mobil. It sounded grand, yet even Hefner knew better. He knew that his own ideas and schemes flowed from many sources, and that if he had to single out a progenitor the credit belonged to Kenneth Ellison. To validate his sincerity, Hefner would tell how he had stood at Kenneth Ellison's grave and vowed to conquer the Anadarko's nethermost regions.

Half a generation ahead of Hefner, Ellison, an independent geologist, extolled the deep potential of the Basin. The only photograph of Ellison that I have seen is in a copy of a newspaper clipping, with a caption that reads, "Kenneth Ellison spots deep wildcat location." It shows a sturdy, well-tailored gentleman—dark suit, white shirt, narrow striped tie, breast-pocket handkerchief—as he stands before a large-scale oil-and-gas-acreage map and uses a wooden pointer to designate a prospective drilling site. There is Kenneth Ellison's noble profile, with strong nose and chin; his large ears; his dark eyebrows; his silver hair brushed straight back. Ellison's eyes, half closed, make him look as if he could use a nice long rest.

The accompanying article, which was published in the *Daily Oklahoman* in the summer of 1963, describes Ellison's plans to redrill a deep Anadarko well called the No. 1 North Corn Unit. Two years earlier, the Continental Oil Company had abandoned the hole at seventeen thousand three hundred and twenty-three feet, in a zone of Mississippian limestone approximately three hundred million years old. It was Kenneth Ellison's desire to go four thousand feet deeper and a hundred and fifty million years further back into geologic time—into Ordovician sediments known in Oklahoma as the Bromide sands. Four months after this story appeared, Kenneth Ellison was dead. While duck hunting one morning with his son, Clark, he had a heart attack, and it was all over. So was the plan to redrill the No. 1 North Corn Unit, which had proceeded far enough to run up nearly half a million dollars in expenses. Ellison had wanted to drill this well for the usual reason: he believed that the North Corn anticline—together with the Fort Cobb anticline, to the southeast—could make him stupendously wealthy.

An anticline is a geologic structure that can be thought of as an underground mountain, an arched folding of subsurface strata. When a geologist looks at a contoured map of such a structure, which is based upon seismic soundings, he looks hopefully at a potential reservoir of oil and gas. The North Corn structure was in the eastern portion of Washita County, and the Fort Cobb was just across the line in Caddo County. In Grady County, which borders Caddo on the east, Ellison had observed the drilling during the early fifties of an exceptionally valuable gas well. From a reservoir of Bromide sands more than two hundred feet thick the well produced a hundred and seventy-five million cubic feet of gas *daily*. *What if the sands grew even* richer as one moved west, toward the Fort Cobb and North Corn structures? Ellison had been in the oil business since the early twenties, and had drilled wells all over Oklahoma. He had seen vivid seismic readings of the fault system that ran parallel to the Fort Cobb and the North Corn, and he believed that the Bromide would thicken greatly as the Anadarko Basin descended. Of the Fort Cobb anticline he once wrote, "Geologically, it is practically an impossibility to drill a completely dry hole on the Fort Cobb Anticline should the well be drilled deep enough to test all potentially oil/gas-bearing formations under the area."

A well that was drilled into a limestone-and-dolomite deposit known as the Arbuckle, more than four miles down, would penetrate almost all the known producing sands, limestones, dolomites, and shales found in Oklahoma. Ellison could easily imagine a Bromide layer three hundred or five hundred feet thick along the way. He was not unwilling to consider a thousand, or even fifteen hundred, feet of Bromide. He could imagine multiple pay zones and vast reservoirs, individual wells that, even at late-nineteen-fifties prices, could yield hydrocarbons worth twenty million dollars. Ellison was a magnificent extrapolator. No wonder Hefner admired him. There *was no reason, Ellison pointed out,* that the Fort Cobb and North Corn anticlines, resting beneath ninety thousand surface acres, should not produce thirty or thirty-five trillion



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cubic feet of gas. The structure should be worth billions. Kenneth Ellison died broke.

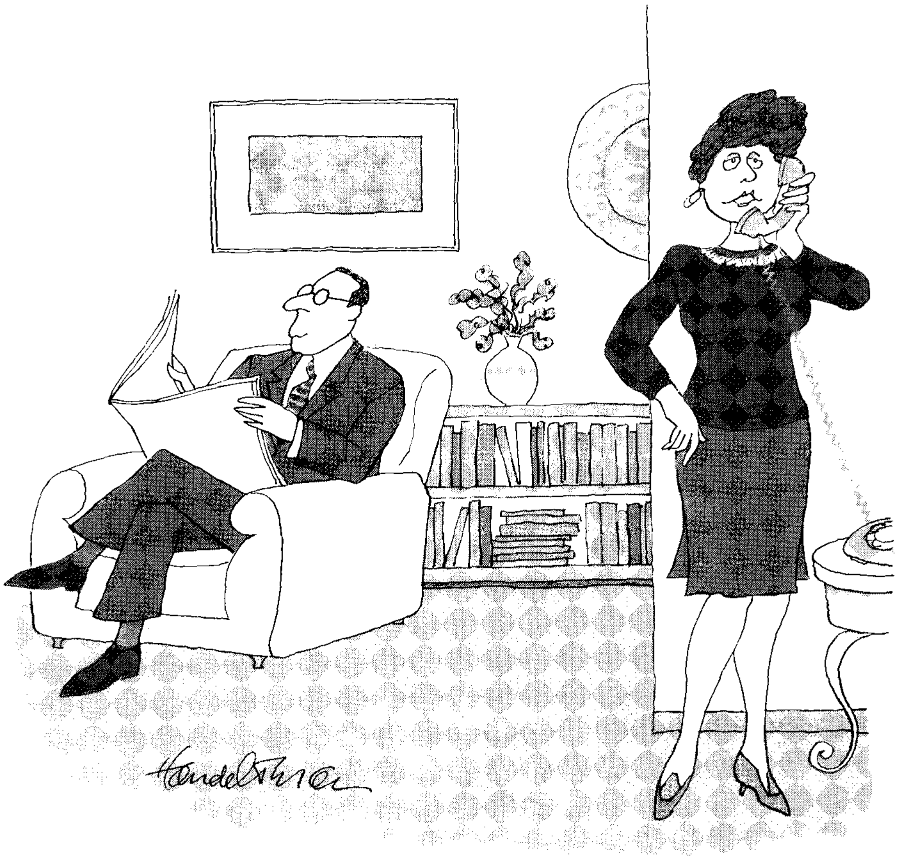
STARTING in the late nineteen-fifties, when Ellison began in earnest to buy Anadarko acreage and to seek major partners, deep wildcats had been drilled in the Fort Cobb or the North Corn every five or six years. Ambition seemed to run several years ahead of the requisite technology. Often the wells approached record depths, and always something went wrong: equipment would break and become irretrievably lost downhole, drill pipe would be cemented inside the well bore, erratic pressures would make it impossible to complete a well, well bores would collapse, courage would flag. Ellison remained a believer. One of his business associates at the end was M. P. Appleby, Jr., known to his familiars as Buddy. Ellison had worked with Appleby's father when they were both employed by an oil company in Tulsa. In Appleby, Jr., he recognized someone with the ability to raise funds and chase oil-and-gas leases. Ellison's untimely demise was a great inconvenience to his only child, Clark, and to Buddy Appleby as well as to his creditors. He was more than a million dollars in debt—mainly to oil-field service firms but also to a couple of bankers. Clark, who had already received in trust certain leases, minerals, and producing properties, had co-signed some of his father's notes. It took eight years to settle Ellison's estate, during which Clark and Buddy did what they could to keep interest in the North Corn and the Fort Cobb alive. Working without a formal partnership agreement, they leased acreage together and traded it for carried interests in deep wells. When leases expired, they leased the minerals again. "We're tribe to the Anadarko Indians," Buddy liked to say, referring to some of the landowners in the North Corn and Fort Cobb areas. "Every one of those kids that's college-educated down there—Clark and I paid for that."

When I caught up with Buddy Appleby, he was in his fifties and was talking about retiring. He was a wiry man with a dimpled chin, a perpetual half smile, and white hair that he parted down the middle. Some of the energy that he drew upon when he hustled dollars and acres for Kenneth Ellison had dissipated. He had some ex-wives. He spoke deliberately, in a delicate voice. He had maxims for many occasions. One Appleby maxim went, "If you drill a successful wildcat, you want to own the entire structure"—meaning that it was a wise idea to spread your money over as much acreage as possible. "You should buy two acres for every one acre you want," went another.

Clark Ellison was a courtly man, more Southern than Southwestern, and tweedy by oilpatch standards. He was shaped like a relief pitcher—tall and a few pounds over trim—and he had a soft face. When his father died, he was twenty-one years old and an undergraduate at the University of Oklahoma, majoring in petroleum-land management. That Clark did not brim with charisma was just as well. Charisma and hubris often travel as a pair, and it was a combination of the two that had tempted Kenneth Ellison to try to hold on to too much with limited resources. Clark never cared to spread himself throughout the Anadarko. If Kenneth's belief in the Fort Cobb and the North Corn had substance, that would be good enough.

The earliest seismic surveying of the Fort Cobb structure had been done by the Superior Oil Company in the nineteen-forties. Kenneth Ellison's map of the original Superior seismic had become folded, bent, stained, and mutilated. Several major oil companies paid for seismic surveys in later years. Thanks to variable-density cross-sections and six-fold computer stacks, Clark and Buddy were able to work with fresher maps. Always the same picture showed up—the same basic formation. There was definitely something down there, if only some big operators could be persuaded to drill deep enough to get an up-close look.

During the summer of 1974, Ellison and Appleby hired themselves as lease brokers. They bought four thousand acres of five-year leases throughout the Fort Cobb, and immediately proceeded to mark up and resell chunks of the acreage to raise cash to participate in wells. Knowing that they could not afford troublesome, expensive holes, they rarely held on to more than eighty or a hundred and twenty acres in a section. "We were always wealthy men," Appleby said. "But we were short of cash." They ended up owning pieces of troublesome, expensive holes anyway: derricks toppled, drilling mud



"Edgar is fine, marred only by a certain irritating tendency toward self-congratulation."

• •

boiled and marbled into impermeability, wells blew out.

One of their most promising but most costly ventures was the Phifer No. 1, which had as its objective the Hunton formation, a Siluro-Devonian limestone four miles deep, just above the Bromide. Drilling began in the summer of 1977, and in the spring of 1978 something happened to ruin the well. The episode also appeared to ruin Ellison and Appleby, who had run out of money and whose leases were about to expire. Exasperated, they filed a negligence suit against the operator of the Phifer No. 1. The complaint was settled in Ellison and Appleby's favor, and they were able to use the damages, plus some money borrowed at super-usurious rates, to buy back leases in the Phifer vicinity. This time, they paid two hundred and fifty dollars an acre in bonuses.

Some shallower wells were by now being drilled on Ellison and Appleby's acreage in the Fort Cobb, but nothing as audacious as the Hunton prospect that they had in mind in northwest Caddo County, in the same township as the Phifer No. 1, on land owned by a peanut farmer named Glenn Stevens. Getting to the Hunton meant spudding through Stevens' topsoil and farther, past the Permian and the lower Pennsylvanian and the Mississippian into the Siluro-Devonian, or, to put it another lyrical way, through the Virgil, Missouri, Des Moines, Skinner, Red Fork, Atoka, Morrow, Springer, Chester, and Sycamore formations. Of course, Ellison and Appleby had no means of getting there alone, because once again they were broke. Oil-field reputations depend on results, not intentions. Technical excuses notwithstanding, Ellison and Appleby looked like losers. Logs from the Phifer convinced them that, with the right operator, they could drill a successful Hunton test. They spread their maps around town, they begged to be carried. "We were huntin' for the Hunton, baby," Appleby recalled. "And we were suckin' wind." No one expressed interest until, one atypical day, they met Clifford W. Culpepper.

I ONCE did something truly graceless that irritated Cliff Culpepper. I composed a list of questions that I intended to ask someone who knew Culpepper well. Then, by mistake, I left the list in a bar, where it was found by someone else who knew him well. When Culpepper got hold of the list, he took offense and decided never to speak to me again. For some time thereafter, I moved about warily, concerned that Culpepper and I were going to have a chance encounter that would cause me pain. Eventually, I eased my mind with the thought that, although I had visited him in his office and had spoken with him a few times, it was unlikely that he knew what I looked like. Our eyes had never met. When you dealt with Culpepper face to face, so to speak, his eyes seemed hooded and focussed—or unfocussed—on something over your shoulder or deep in the outfield. Culpepper was in his late fifties. He had gray hair that fell across his forehead and one of those craggy faces that are creased like an old road map. His eyes might have been green. Or maybe they were brown, or gray. I really don't know. When Culpepper talked, his arms flapped from the elbow and his hands fluttered, as if he were trying to restore circulation to his fingertips or were conducting a miniature orchestra. One other remarkable thing: Culpepper's handshake. In the oilpatch, in the kingdom of Okiesmo—where real men were never less than manly and bigger was always better, where a handshake bound you to your word and got you what you needed—Culpepper had a handshake like cold cooked spaghetti. His fingers went loose. There was no grip. Cliff Culpepper seemed to have no handshake at all.

"We showed our deal to over a hundred people," Buddy Appleby told me. "One day, I read in the paper that Cliff Culpepper and his partner had split up. I saw Culpepper's picture. I said, 'Clark, here's a guy who really needs our help.' Clark says, 'Oh, no. You don't want to do business with him.' I said, 'Clark, how's he gonna give *us* a hard time?' " First, they made a run at Culpepper's ex-partner, who before becoming an oilman had been a football coach. Years earlier, this man had entered local legend when he was accused by the University of Texas football coach of spying on the Longhorns before their annual game with Oklahoma. The ex-partner looked at the Phifer logs and the Fort Cobb seismic survey and declined to get involved. So that left Culpepper.

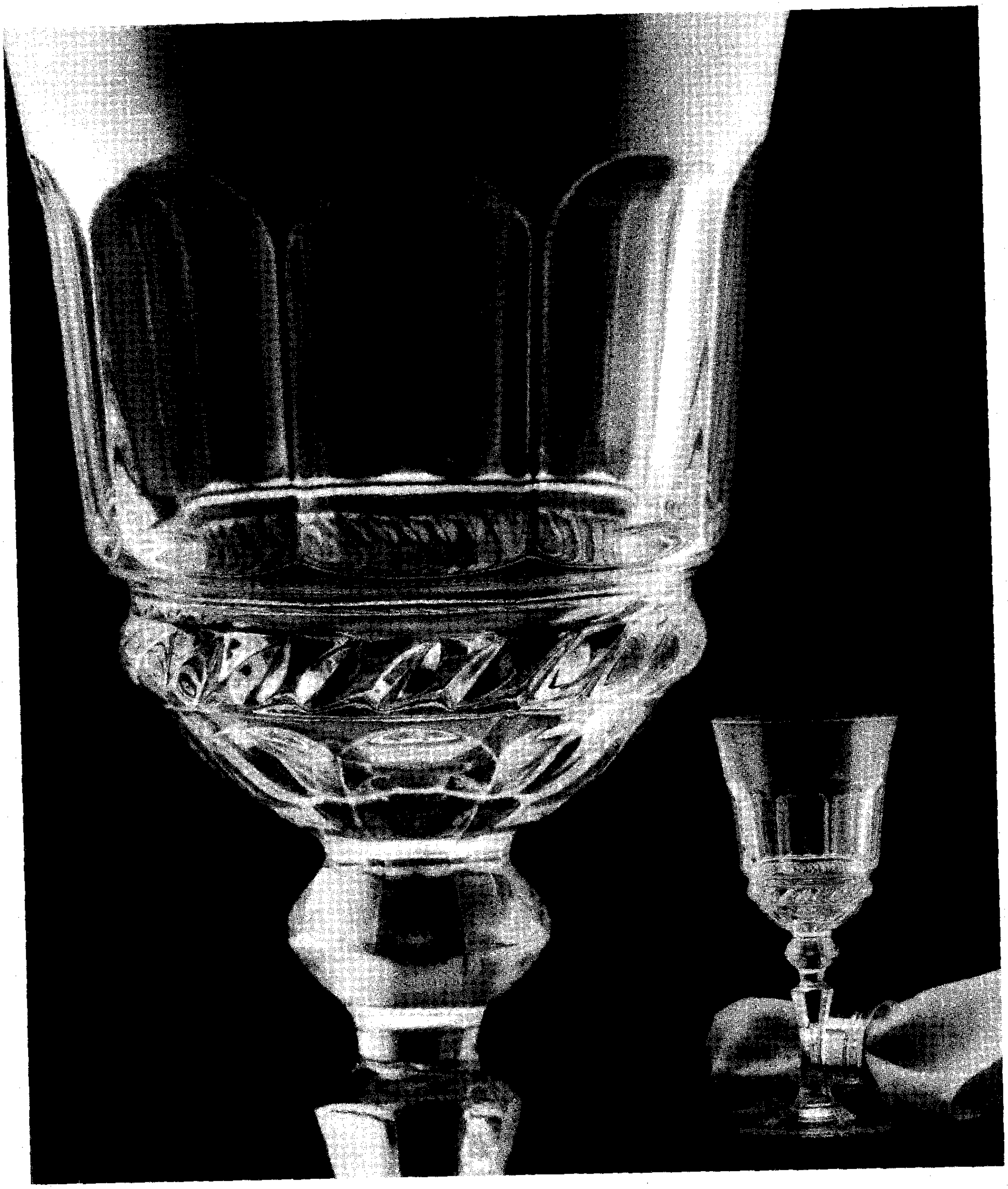
If Cliff Culpepper liked you—or, at least, needed to get along with you—he called you "Mr." plus your first name. Culpepper had just incorporated a new enterprise, the Ports of Call Oil Company. Ellison and Appleby became Mr. Clark and Mr. Bud. "Mr. Clark and Mr. Bud, everything's gonna be just as clean and simple as can be," Culpepper promised when he agreed that Ports of Call would operate a well in the Fort Cobb, in Section 14-10N-13W, Caddo County. "We'll use Jack Hodges' tools on this well, and you'll never have a problem."

Jack Hodges owned drilling rigs and he owned trucks the size of DC-10s for hauling drilling rigs. He owned much oil-and-gas production. No one ever suggested that Jack Hodges had inferior Okiesmo. A friend of Jack Hodges once explained his basic philosophy: "Jack just wants to have things that are big. He's big, his kids are big, his house is big, he flies a big plane. He owns big rigs, and he hauls them around with big trucks."

I recall reading a newspaper account of the wedding of Jack Hodges' daughter. The parking valets wore brocade frock coats and powdered wigs. "An eighteenth-century-French-garden feeling prevailed as a violinist and flutist played for arriving guests." The wedding cake was eighteen feet tall, in keeping with the eighteen motif. "Trucks and cranes, representing the family business, were drawn with icing on the sides of the cake." When Jack Hodges spent a dollar, he spent a big dollar. He donated two million dollars to help erect a public greenhouse called a botanical tube in downtown Oklahoma City. He donated fifty thousand to help redecorate the White House just a few weeks after Ronald Reagan decontrolled oil prices, in 1981. "The top man of this country ought to live in one of the top places," Hodges said at the time. A painted legend on the finger-board of each of Jack Hodges' drilling rigs said "Come On, America."

"We'll use Jack Hodges' tools, and we'll do just fine," Culpepper promised Ellison and Appleby. "I've never had a fishing job in my life. There won't be any problems. Mr. Bud, Jack Hodges and I are very close friends. We got houses right next door to each other in Cancún."

If Culpepper wanted something



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from you, if he was maybe planning to slip one past you, he'd call you Sunshine or Kingfish. There would be a well drilling somewhere and the phone would ring at four in the morning and you'd hear this twang, all wound up, saying, "Good news, Kingfish," or "Sunshine, here's what we're gonna do." When Culpepper wanted something that no one else seemed able to find—a special rig, a special string of pipe—he called Jack Hodges. Ports of Call would operate the well, Hodges would make the hole, and Ellison and Appleby, in exchange for half of their acreage, would get a free trip to the Hunton. It seemed reasonably auspicious.

"When Buddy and Clark made that deal with Cliff, I was there," Jack Hodges later recalled. Eager to get involved Hodges was not, but Culpepper had been his friend for thirty years. "I saw the deal, I saw the maps. It looked O.K., but as far as I was concerned it was just another rank wildcat well. That thing had been shopped all over. Cliff was the only harum-scarum person in town who would make a deal like that, and I was the only person who could get him a deep rig. I had a rig out in the yard that was a week away from being finished, and I pulled it off another job that it was headed for so Cliff could use it. From the first time I saw the acreage and the charts, from the moment Ellison and Appleby put the pants on Cliff, I knew Cliff had to drill the best well in the world to make money on it."

The terms that Ellison and Appleby exacted were quite favorable to them, considering that Culpepper was the only operator who had expressed interest in their proposal. In return for a one-half interest in Ellison and Appleby's acreage, Culpepper agreed to drill and complete a productive well—an arrangement known as drill-to-earn. If Culpepper cared to protect himself against the risk that the well would be dry or could not be completed, he would have to sell part of his stake to other investors. "We're selling this two for one and a third for a quarter," Culpepper would say, assuming that he and whomever he was hustling understood what that meant. In its simplest form, a third for a quarter is an arrangement whereby three passive investors share the cost of drilling a well and the well's promoter earns a quarter of whatever it produces. "Two for one and a third for a quarter" meant, essentially, that Culpepper had to promote the hell out of the deal.

Culpepper started by giving the well a name that struck him as romantic: the Tomcat No. 1. "You know, an ole tomcat goes huntin' at night," Cliff said. "I like to go huntin' at night." The name alone proved to be not irresistible enough. To sell the Tomcat No. 1, he had to make it part of a bigger package.

"We made Culpepper a *tough* deal," Appleby said. "After we first talked about it, he called us back and said he needed more acreage. So we threw in half of what we had in five other sections on the structure. Then we had to throw in four more sections."

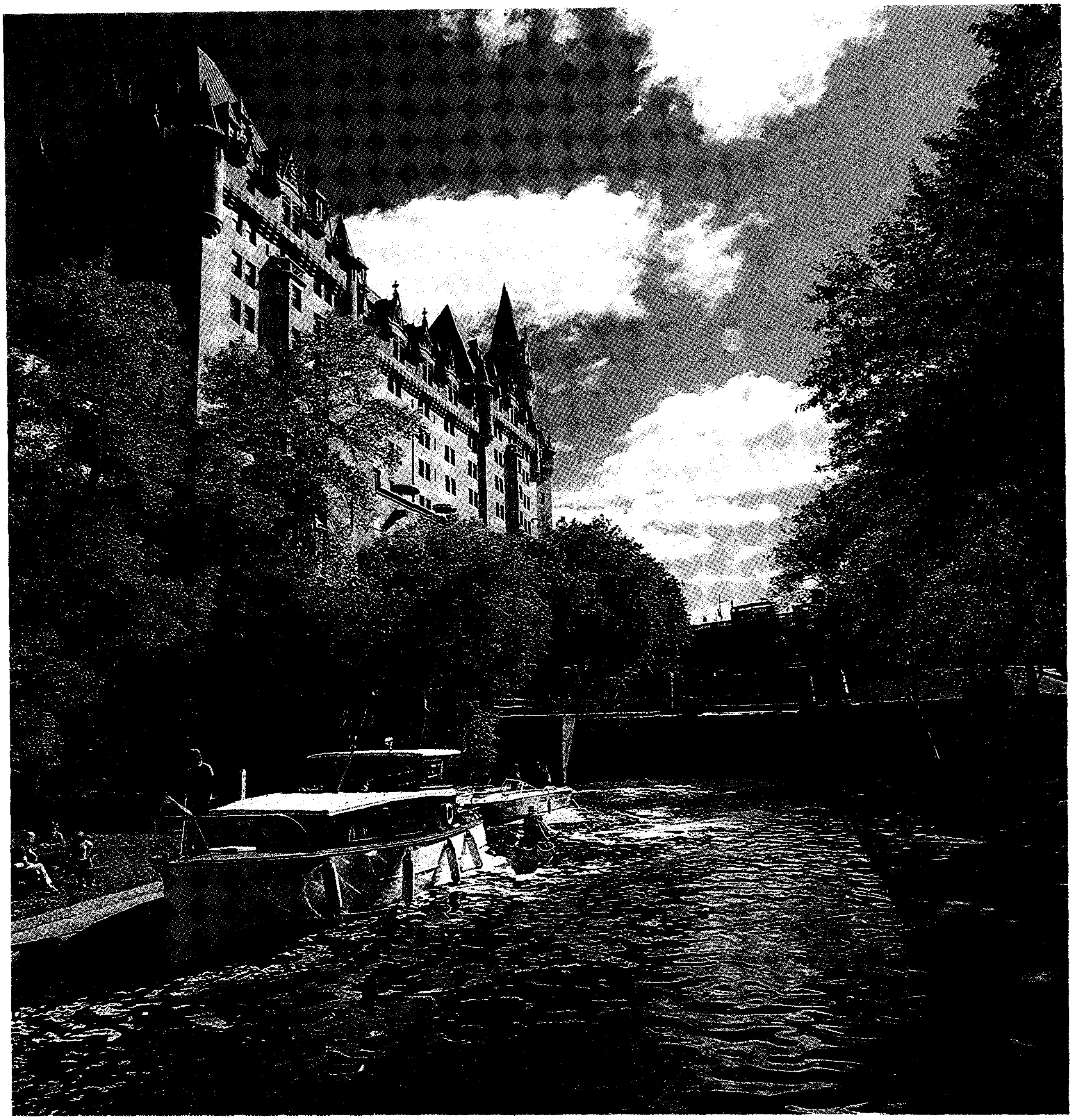
For Ellison and Appleby, this meant a chance to get many more of their prospects drilled. For Culpepper, more acreage meant more wells to operate, more two-for-one and third-for-a-quarter hocus-pocus, more opportunities for profit. According to the Oklahoma Securities Commission, which periodically expressed interest in how Culpepper operated, his fund-raising techniques were idiosyncratic. In his happy, hyperbolic moods, he liked to say that he had drilled three hundred wells in six years, only fifteen dry holes among them. When he operated a well, he wanted to spud it, drill it, complete it, hook it up to a pipeline as fast as possible, and get on to the next one. Going to the courthouse to record mineral leases, applying for drilling permits at the Corporation Commission, sending triplicate notices to the surface landowners, petitioning for location exceptions—those administrative details never held great fascination for Culpepper. Employees of the government, he would remind associates, were "just a bunch of clerks who have created a lot of rules to take my money away from me."

It never seemed clear how Culpepper had made the money in the first place. After the Tomcat, people talked about him quite a bit, and you would hear different tales. You would hear that Culpepper way back when had drilled the such-and-such well straight up and that his fortune rested upon that. It might have been the Newberry well, or maybe the Mickey wells, the ones he drilled in the sixties, in Dewey County. Perhaps it was the Wright, the Grady County well that Culpepper borrowed six hundred thousand to drill and that ultimately returned something like fifteen to one. Some people said Cliff had made his reputation, if not necessarily his money, the time another Grady County well blew out on him. Instead of hiring Red Adair or one of those other expensive folk heroes, he had put on an asbestos suit and gone up on the rig and shut the well back in himself.

Most facts about Culpepper were adumbrated; filling it all in required traipsing through some obscure terrain. Cliff Culpepper was born in Alabama and moved with his mother to Oklahoma in the nineteen-thirties. He had sharp memories of the Depression. There was no father around. Eighth grade was as far as he got in school. Franklin Roosevelt helped him learn auto mechanics and welding and sheet-metal work. For sixteen years, he toured the southern-Oklahoma oil fields for Halliburton, the giant well-servicing company. The eighty-four-hour workweek was not a rarity. He drove cement trucks and bulldozers, side booms and tankers. He hauled drilling mud, frac fluids, brine, and diesel. When he saw heavy mud used as a lubricant in deep wells, he got the idea of salvaging it from the pits and filtering and lightening and reselling it. As a sideline, he was becoming an entrepreneur, specializing in dirty work.

Culpepper's skills were operational rather than managerial. Jack Hodges said, "What I guess I admired about Cliff was his gutsiness. Cliff'll roll the dice with you. The tool pushers on some of those wells Cliff was servicing would show him an electric log. Say whoever owned the well was going to plug and abandon it. But the log don't always tell the whole story. This tool pusher might see something he likes on that log and he tells Cliff about a zone they missed. So, for very little money, Cliff goes back into some of those wells. And he gets *real* lucky. He made seven or eight wells that way. Around the mid-sixties, Cliff showed up in town one day driving a Lincoln and wearing a hundred-dollar suède coat—the way he dresses sometimes, you're sure he's color-blind—and he was looking for a banker."

An Oklahoma City banker I know liked Culpepper, and not merely because he paid back what he borrowed. One time, when they had agreed on a loan, Culpepper shook hands and the



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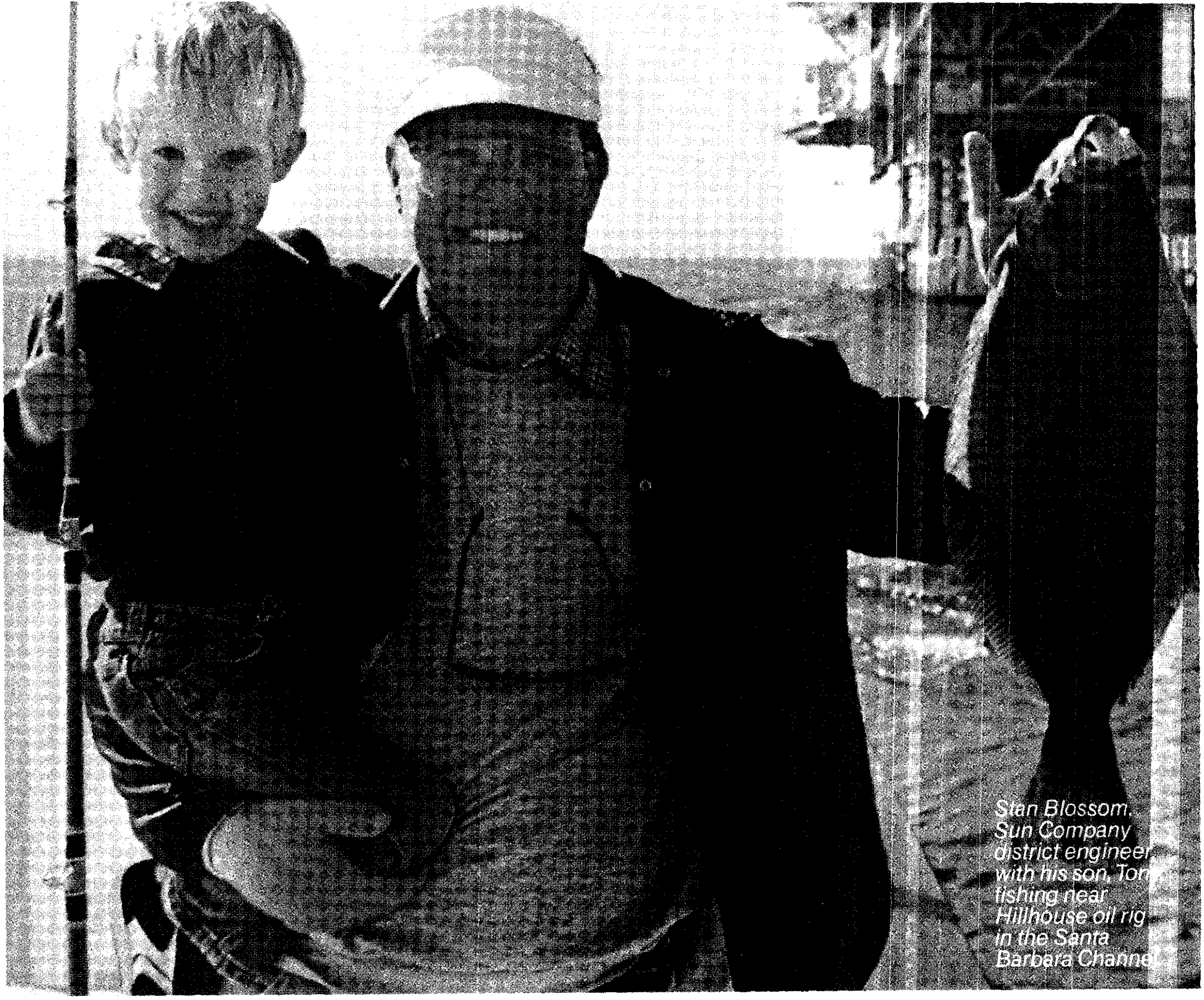

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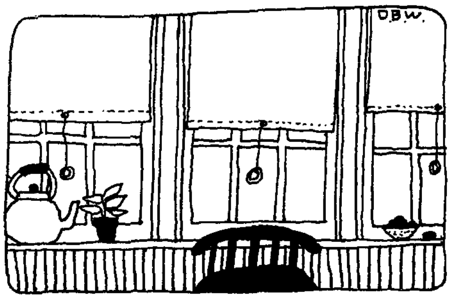
banker asked, "Don't you want to know the interest rate?" Culpepper replied, "I know you'll be fair with me." Once prosperity had invaded Culpepper's life, the word "no" disappeared from his vocabulary. "If you play for pennies, all you'll do is make pennies. If you play for dollars, you'll make dollars" was his creed. When Culpepper saw something he liked, one wasn't good enough. Three wasn't good enough. He wanted six or eight or ten. It was nice to have twenty-two Ultrasuede jackets. By the early seventies, he controlled at least three trucking companies and he had interests in fifty wells. Less than ten years later, the value of the entire enterprise had expanded into the stout eight-figure range. Along the way came the Learjet, then two more Learjets, then the jet helicopter, the second home in Cancún, the third home in Baja, the seaside estate in Santa Barbara, the eighty-two-foot yacht in Newport Beach.

As an operator, Culpepper was known for his ability to drill successfully "under balance"—a technique that involves maintaining a drilling-mud weight just at or below the level necessary to prevent a blowout. Erratic pressures made this a requirement in many areas, including certain deep zones of the Anadarko. Culpepper's system allowed him to operate under "controlled blowout" conditions: to absorb a sudden kick of high-pressure gas—the wild jolt that you might get from a Tomcat—without interrupting the drilling. Once he had drilled to total depth, Culpepper practiced a peculiar method of well completion. To complete a well is to do whatever will permit oil or gas to be extracted. The ideal approach is the one that leads to the greatest long-term recovery of hydrocarbons from the reservoir. Usually, the wall of the formation has to be "perforated"—literally, holes have to be punched in it. In most instances, after a steel casing has been set inside the well bore and cemented into place, a perforating gun is lowered into the hole and fired through the casing and the cement. Either bullets or jets of high-pressure gases do the actual perforating.

A conventional operator perforates a zone, produces oil or natural gas (or both) from it for as long as the economics dictate, then moves uphole to the next potentially worthwhile zone and perforates that. Culpepper was not a conventional operator. His well-completion technique was referred to in the oil field as "grass roots to granite." He had a theory of hydrocarbon-bearing sediments that went like this: "The zone's there, you shoot holes in it, and you get hydrocarbons." The preferred method—the one that said, "Here's ten feet of pay zone. We treat it and produce it and move up. We work from the bottom up"—was not as initially impressive as Culpepper's technique. Culpepper would drill as deep as he intended, run a gamma-ray log, decide which of the zones bore hydrocarbons, and then perforate all of them at once. "Doing it that way, you can get some prodigious production right off the bat, but sometimes you shoot formations that shouldn't be shot," one of Culpepper's former associates has explained. "It might help you impress a potential investor, but you risk bringing in water and other contamination. Cliff just shoots it. Anything that looks like it has any porosity, any potential, Cliff shoots it. Your logs might be deceiving sometimes. Cliff shoots it."

Ellison and Appleby made the Tomcat deal with Culpepper early in 1980, shortly after the Ports of Call Oil Company was incorporated. The previous year, Culpepper and his former partner had drilled nine hundred thousand feet of holes, divided among seventy-five wells, mainly oil—as much as any independent outfit in Oklahoma. Most of this activity took place in Canadian County, immediately west of Oklahoma City, along the eastern flank of the Anadarko Basin. Canadian County offered Culpepper a lucrative known quantity; there were none of the erratic high-pressure zones that cropped up farther out in the Basin, no bizarre geophysics. An average well could be started and completed in a couple of months. Without question, Culpepper was on a roll. "It was all a matter of timing," Buddy Appleby said later. "Cliff was just coming out of Canadian County. He could do no wrong. Technically, he thought everything that applied to Canadian County applied to the Fort Cobb. He thought he was ready for deep stuff. He felt invincible. It's a dangerous feeling."



DRILLING of the Tomcat began in the middle of June, 1980. If everything in the Fort Cobb turned out to be as manageable as Canadian County, Culpepper and Ellison and Appleby could reasonably expect to see the Hunton sands around Christmas. When the drill bit was at fourteen thousand four hundred feet—more than a mile shy of the Hunton, in a zone of highly porous, high-pressure sandstone that was sandwiched between layers of shale—Culpepper encountered the major drawback of drilling under balance. Christmas was going to be delayed. The Tomcat No. 1 blew out. Mud flew, gas spewed, and the well ran wild. Blowouts are good-news, bad-news events. Obviously, the oil or gas is there, but can it be brought under control? The costly but potentially cost-effective remedy is to start over somewhere in the middle. You pour a cement plug as far downhole as possible and then, above the plug, insert a whipstock, or wedge, that will deflect the drill bit and create a hole that slants away from the original well bore. Four months after the blowout, the whipstocked Tomcat had been redrilled to fifteen thousand three hundred and eighty-five feet.

What happened next remains open to interpretation. Poor mud circulation? Poor judgment? Natural caprice? What happened next was that the Tomcat No. 1 unloaded in a cataclysmic fashion. Metal casing had been inserted down to the thirteen-thousand-seven-hundred-and-fifty-foot level, but when the blowout occurred the casing burst. The drilling rig vibrated with enough forewarning to allow the crew to escape. The earth quaked and regurgitated. It was as if Cliff Culpepper had perforated a thousand feet of open hole all at once—one of his trademark grass-roots-to-granite well completions. This time, however, nature itself had squeezed the trigger. "It was like standing in front of ten jet engines all revved up at once," Jack Hodges said. The falling mud and shale, someone else observed, made it "look like it was raining crows."

The spectacle lasted two weeks, and toward the end the gas blew harder than ever. From an interstate highway fifteen miles north you could see a cloud of gas and condensate and solid debris. From two miles away you could hear Beelzebub whistling. Rocketing shale would strike metal, generating sparks; the rig floor would catch fire, and flying mud would extinguish the fires. If the gas failed to disperse, the well site would be a potential bomb. If wind carried the gas south, it could explode a nearby town called Eakly. A blowout-control specialist named Bobby Joe Cudd kept the entire rig from catching fire, but most of the time Culpepper and Hodges and their crews, and Ellison and Appleby and the other interest owners, were reduced to jamming their hands in their pockets, cussing, and kicking rocks. There was enough free time to dredge superlatives: the Tomcat was either the biggest or the loudest or the most something blowout that anyone could remember. Without question, the gas that rose into the atmosphere was the most valuable. The earth had rendered something unearthly.

A temporary pipeline was laid along the ground, and pipeline companies rushed forth with contracts and offers—first five dollars per thousand cubic feet, then seven dollars, then nine. The makeshift pipeline could accommodate only half of what the Tomcat was producing; the rest had to be flared through howitzerlike vents. Consensus said that the well naturally flowed in excess of a hundred million cubic feet of gas a day. Overnight, lease prices in the adjacent sections went from three hundred dollars an acre to three thousand. On the fourteenth day of the blowout, the shale walls of the well bore collapsed, and the Tomcat plugged itself.

Reservoir engineers who had no real foundation for estimating the Tomcat's reserves offered estimates anyway. It could produce a hundred billion cubic feet of methane, they guessed—maybe three hundred billion. Once the Tomcat was whipstocked again and successfully completed, it would be worth . . . But trying to imagine what it might all be worth missed the point. At five dollars, Ellison and Appleby and Culpepper, if he could finish the job—everyone who had bought into the Tomcat was going to be absurdly wealthy. At nine dollars, they were all headed for never-never land. Culpepper could afford more Ultrasuede jackets. The point was that there was no point. Kenneth Ellison had been correct: there was something unusual about the Fort Cobb.

Hedging their bet, Clark Ellison and Buddy Appleby accepted from another exploration company a million-dollar offer for a one-per-cent interest in the Tomcat well. When they received the check, they noticed that it had been drawn on the Penn Square Bank.

THE Tomcat blowout spawned new math and great expectations. A well that freely flowed a hundred million cubic feet of gas a day would in ten days flow a billion. If it could do that in ten days, it could easily, before the reservoir was tapped out, produce a hundred billion cubic feet. At nine dollars per thousand cubic feet, that would come to nine hundred million dollars. Several ifs belonged in the equation, but why quibble? Veterans who had been taught to judge a well's economics by its chances of paying for itself within, say, two or three years found the new math disorienting. During the middle nineteen-sixties, when gas prices had made the big jump from fifteen cents per thousand cubic feet to seventeen cents, sane oilmen weighed the possibility that they were about to become wealthy. Come the Tomcat, sane oilmen ran out and bought new electronic calculators. You needed a device with a twelve-digit display.

People who did not know better entertained the notion that deep drilling was elephant hunting. With sufficient artillery, it was assumed, you could not miss. There were multiple pay zones. You could spend four million dollars and come out with four billion cubic feet of gas every time. If that didn't work, there was always the bigger-fool principle to fall back upon. The bigger-fool principle said: No matter what I pay for something today, there is bound to be a bigger fool tomorrow who will pay more for it and bail me out. Beginning in 1973, the rising value of oil and gas began to bail bankers out of otherwise marginal loans. Everything inflated—leasehold costs, royalties, drilling costs, material costs, labor costs, engineering costs. Geologists suddenly expected six-figure salaries, overriding royalty interests, and fancy perks. Tool pushers in the Anadarko Basin could pull down forty thou per year. Training schools for roughnecks opened and were immediately oversubscribed. By the end of 1981, more than three hundred deep rigs, plus a hundred or so with shallower capacities, were working in the Oklahoma portion of the Anadarko. The value of this capital equipment came to more than a billion and a half dollars. One widely accepted estimate was that over four billion dollars was spent that year in the Anadarko—and a billion and a quarter more elsewhere in the state. Eleven thousand miles of hole were drilled. Juggling the big numbers all day long, you still could not quantify the human implications.

During one phase, a good portion of the Oklahoma oil industry's operating capital was flowing through the treasuries of small independent companies that had grabbed the chance to sell stock to the public. Before that boomlet peaked, in early 1981—the penny-stock players, it appears, had the jump on the banks by a full year—underwriters had to cull among promoters and eager investors. Certain public companies did not want you buying their stock unless you could produce proof that you were a good Christian ("The wisest & best move that thou couldst possibly make, in pursuit of good investments, is a mailing of thy good checks for substantial amounts of cash money unto GOD & SON at the above address"); believing in eighty-dollar crude oil was not enough—you also had to *believe*. A black hole opened and ingested the people who had lived in the oilpatch all their lives but had never before sunk a dime in the earth—hairdressers, file clerks, chiropractors. Quite a few dollars went into overhead. Publicly raised funds decorated some sparkling new offices—places that visitors passed through exclaiming, "Hey, I like your environment a *lot!*" More than Okie mattress money was involved. There were also francs, Deutsche marks, pounds, guilders. Tax treaties paved the way for English syndicates and Netherlands Antilles corporations and German limited partnerships—a rush of flight capital that travelled an oblique path through the London Stock Exchange and the Vancouver Stock Exchange and then into drilling-fund shares, every earnest franc, Deutsche mark, pound, or guilder diminished along the way by a grateful promoter. As the used-car-dealer population of Vancouver dropped, the independent-oilman population rose. To make those investments pay, you had to find four or five dollars' worth of petroleum for every investment dollar. Speculators jumped in, assuming that oil stocks selling for a dollar today would sell for five dollars within three months. Mass cupidity, a banality of greed, took hold—not sinful, just harmful. Solid citizens lost control of

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themselves. How were you going to survive in a cocktail conversation if you were not in on the game?

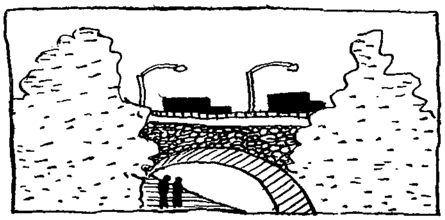
In January of 1981, an oilman named Bill Saxon paid forty million dollars for twelve hundred and eighty-six acres of mineral leases forty miles southwest of the North Corn and the Fort Cobb, where there was said to be a geologic structure as exciting as a trip to Jupiter. Previously, Saxon had been doing just fine drilling oil wells in west Texas, and he had recently sold Saxon Oil stock to the public, pocketing thirty-eight million dollars in the process. His new playground was in a corner of the Anadarko referred to, interchangeably, as the Fletcher Field or the Cyril Basin. When someone asked him what he had in mind, paying forty million dollars for twelve hundred and eighty-six acres, he said, "I was ready for a little higher risk. And I wanted to give these guys with me a chance to be a one-billion-dollar company."

A Wall Street securities analyst published a research report on the Fletcher Field that predicted reserves of forty billion cubic feet of gas per square mile and seven million cubic feet of gas per day at an average price of eight dollars per thousand cubic feet. The "average" well would thus generate fifteen million dollars a year, more than a hundred million during its productive lifetime. According to even bigger fools, the Fletcher had two billion cubic feet of gas in every foot of pay zone. If there were a hundred feet of pay in a well, and methane sold for nine dollars, every well would be worth a billion eight hundred million dollars. And so forth. Major oil companies flocked. The Kerr-McGee Corporation made plans to spend a hundred and fifty million dollars in the Fletcher in 1982, then brought in Texaco as a partner. Robert A. Hefner III did not ignore what was happening southwest of the Tomcat. In 1981, he paid thirty-seven and a half million dollars for a fifteen-thousand-acre position in the Cyril Basin—a steal, he assumed, projecting that he would eventually discover sixteen trillion cubic feet of reserves. "I'll stake my reputation as an explorationist on that," he said, and he did.

A WHILE ago, I had a conversation with a man on the West Coast whose career was in a brief lull—a circumstance that seemed to bother him not at all. He was half of a two-person fund-raising team that in the preceding five years had sold a quarter of a billion dollars' worth of oil-and-gas drilling-fund partnerships. Because of the nature of drilling-fund financing, the money that was raised actually resulted in more than half a billion dollars' worth of oil-and-gas exploration. The two fund raisers specialized in anonymity, found their clients by word of mouth, never wrote a letter ("not even a thank-you note") without first consulting an attorney, employed a part-time receptionist, usually answered their own phones, and retained two per cent of every dollar they minted. "A couple of small operators" is one way they referred to themselves. "If we did what we did, imagine what Merrill Lynch and Dean Witter could do," one of the fund raisers said.

During a five-year stretch beginning in 1977, registered drilling funds raised twenty billion dollars—more than a fifth of what was spent for onshore exploration in the United States. "There was an enthusiastic reception by the world for oil," I was informed by a broker in New York City, who had spent very little of his life on oil rigs. "Sometimes you have to sell what people want to buy."

Boldface capital letters on the cover of every legal drilling-fund prospectus said, "The securities described herein involve a high degree of risk." That was a pro-forma message. Risk was not the first thing on most investors' minds. If ever a free-money proposition existed, it was the leveraged tax-shelter drilling fund. Everyone could enjoy the benefits—fund sponsors, securities lawyers, investors, bankers. The clients of the man on the West Coast had the resources to invest at least two hundred thousand dollars per "investment unit"—a magnitude that attracted real-estate geniuses, old-money rich folks, gastroenterologists, high-priced accountants. The smaller drilling funds, with a minimum investment ranging from, say, five thousand dollars to twenty-five thousand, brought in the ophthalmologists and dentists and attorneys. Most funds were designed as limited partnerships—heavily lawyered variations of the industry-standard third-for-a-quarter.



The most tantalizing drilling programs required a limited partner to pay in cash only a fraction of his total investment. The Penn Square Bank was enamored of a device called the letter of credit, which is a bank's guarantee, on behalf of a creditworthy customer, that it will pay another party the face value of the letter. Historically, letters of credit have been tools of international trade but have not been widely used in risk ventures. In a leveraged drilling fund, the general partner might require of a limited partner a down payment of twenty-five per cent plus a letter of credit from a bank for the balance of an investment. The general partner would eventually take the letters of credit to the Penn Square Bank, where it was possible to borrow against them, with the letters securing the loan. In turn, Penn Square, a merchant bank, would sell the drilling-fund loan to an upstream bank—to one of the big-city correspondent banks with which Beep Jennings and Bill Patterson had cultivated a loan-brokering relationship. From the point of view of, say, Continental Illinois, which was Penn Square's principal upstream correspondent bank, drilling-fund loans had much promise. The interest rate was two or two and a half points above prime. Even if a drilling program found no oil or gas—an unthinkable possibility—the upstream bank's position was secured by the letters of credit. The administrative requirements for servicing these loans were considerable, but administrative details were supposed to be Penn Square's responsibility.

You could buy what suited your tastes. Any investor who did not feel like tying up his money with a twenty-five-per-cent down payment could find a fund that required no money down. *Free money.* A letter of credit would guarantee the entire investment—cover not only exploration and overhead costs but also interest payments on the drilling program's borrowing. There was an immediate tax benefit to be realized by deducting drilling costs, and there was the assumption that future oil-and-gas income would pay off the drilling program's debts. If all went well—and why not?—an investor could plunk down zero dollars in cash in quest of a big tax benefit and a handsome profit. You could buy a share in an exploratory drilling program and go wildcatting in the deep Anadarko, or you could aim for less risk and potentially less reward in an already developed field. The major oil companies and the big independents always leased more acreage than they could drill themselves. The surplus they farmed out, often to operators with the sketchiest track records. Raising funds and not sticking the money in the ground was a crime, and no one wanted to be accused of that. Tremendous pressure existed to keep pace with events. With the drilling-fund money pouring in, the next challenge was to find rigs to drill it up. New rigs had to be built, and that meant that more money had to be borrowed. The inordinate demand for rigs led lease brokers to decide suddenly to become drilling contractors. Thanks to the letter of credit, a small-fry Oklahoma-bred independent oilman could envision vertical integration.

The whole thing was an exercise in tail-swallowing. Rare was the potential investor who properly scrutinized the economics. If a fund had to pay an average royalty of twenty-five per cent, and if it was predicated upon the third-for-a-quarter principle, that meant a raw investment dollar was immediately reduced to seventy-five per cent of seventy-five cents—fifty-six and a quarter cents. If fund-raising fees and general and administrative expenses also came off the top, and if the acreage cost too much to begin with, and if a fund operator with an Exxonish fantasy had arranged to buy drilling mud, pipe, bulldozer work, and contract drilling from himself, and if, along the way, a green roughneck slipped on the rig floor and accidentally dropped a pipe wrench down a ten-thousand-foot hole, then a dollar had to work frightfully hard just to return itself, even if oil should go to sixty dollars a barrel. Prospectuses never elaborated the risks in such detail.

Entertaining science fiction has turned up in recent months in depositions taken from hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar-a-unit investors who have been asked to describe how oil-and-gas exploration works. Oil and gas, according to these sworn statements, hang out in big pools underground, waiting for a real-estate mogul from Marina del Rey to fork over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars so an oil company can sink a metal straw down there and slurp up the goo. A lawyer for one of these sophisticated investors once asked me, "What would you do if you had a lot of money and if you had to figure out something to do with it, otherwise you're in a

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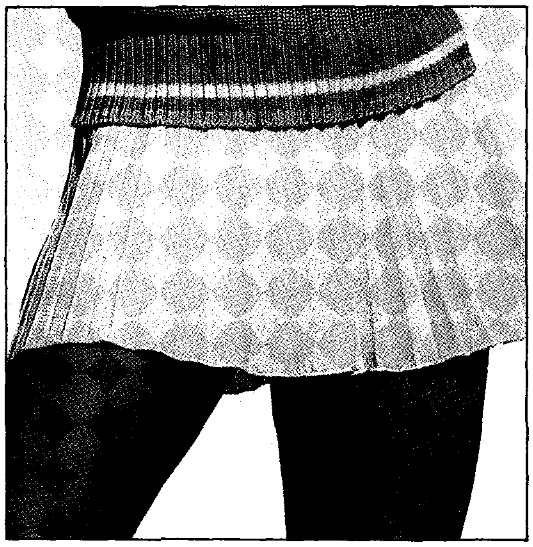

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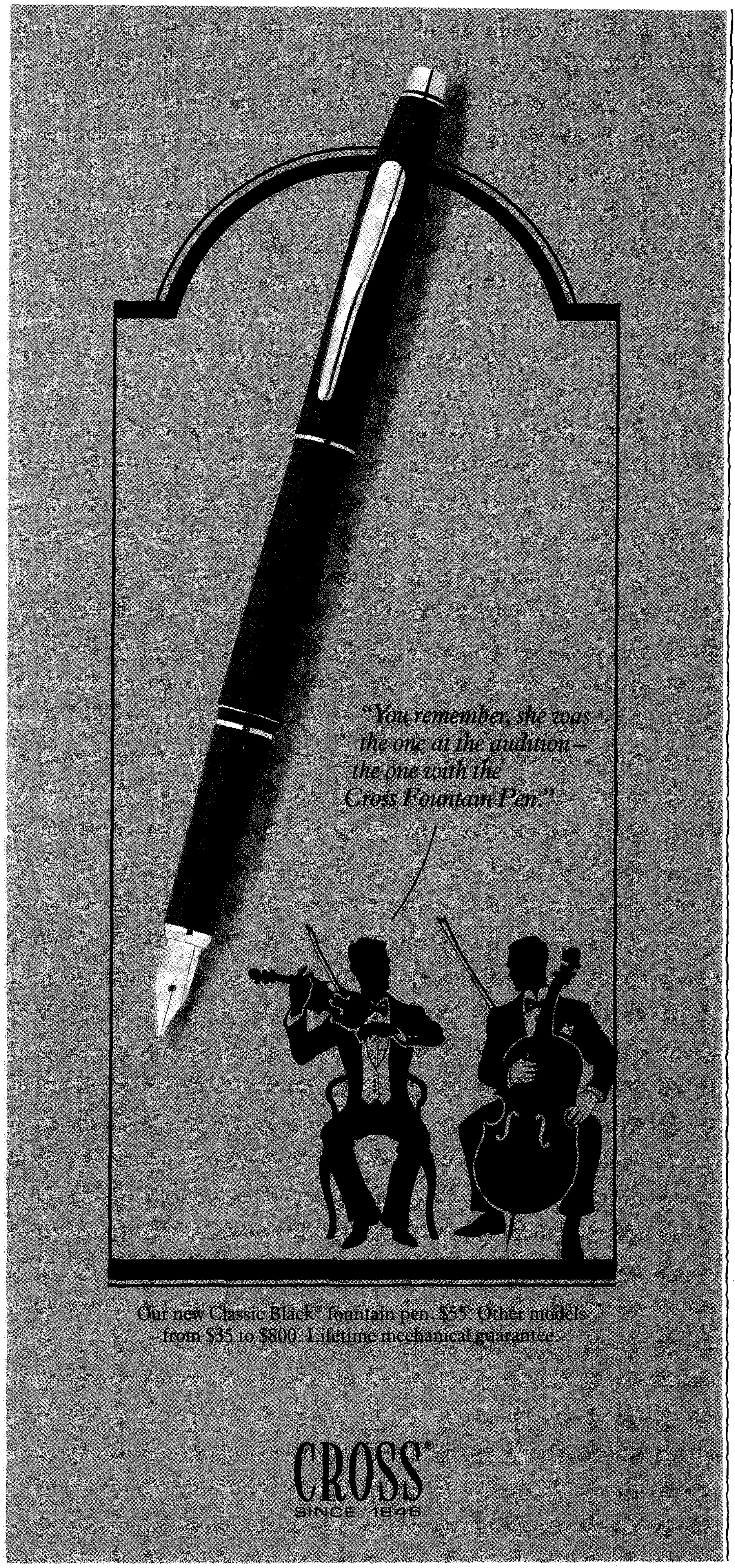
very high tax bracket and you're going to have to give it to the government? And someone tells you that for no money down, just a letter of credit, interest payments built into the investment-unit share, a rollover down the line into a straight oil-and-gas-production loan, a tax deduction right now for intangible drilling costs, a chance to make a lot more money down the road, and so forth—for all of that, all you have to do is sign on the dotted line right now? And—*and*—a bank in Oklahoma City that knows the guys who are selling the drilling fund says that they are good people, *plus* they do business with Chase Manhattan and Continental Illinois, a couple of the biggest banks in the country? What would you do?"

One other thing that sophisticated investors understood about the oil-and-gas business: it was damned impressive to fly first class to Oklahoma City, to have dinner at a restaurant called Cowboys (where you could order steak fingers and quail and fresh channel catfish and calf fries) and watch real Western ladies and range riders dance the two-step, to have breakfast at the country club, to take a quick helicopter ride out to the Anadarko to see a genuine goddam deep rig punching a hole in the ground, and to hear from a Penn Square banker that everything would work out just fine.

WHILE I was visiting with J. D. Allen in his office one day, I sat in a comfortable chair only inches from some valuable mementos. Situated on his desk so that it confronted any visitor was a teak-framed color snapshot, and next to it sat a walnut plaque. A small silver-plated eagle—the insignia of a group of the Republican Party's most generous donors—was fastened to the plaque. In the photograph were Wayne Newton, Gerald Ford, and J. D. Allen, all dressed in black tie and seated at a banquet table. The former President's shirtfront was white, Wayne Newton's was blue, and J.D.'s was white with black-edged scallops. I studied the photograph: J.D. seated to Wayne's left; Gerald Ford to Wayne's right with his arm resting on the crooner's shoulder; Wayne's deep tan; Wayne's pink-carnation boutonnière; Wayne smiling; Wayne's upper lip curled; all those teeth; J.D. bearing a potent resemblance to Wayne except that Wayne's mustache was thinner and his sideburns and pompadour were



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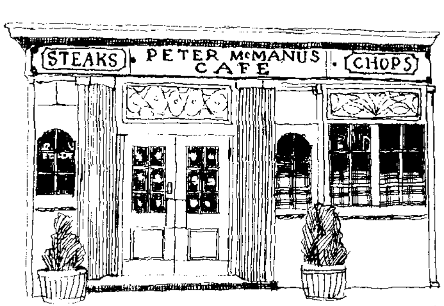
thicker; J.D. looking as if he were getting ready to smile, too. A handwritten ink message on the photograph said, "To my friend, J. D. Allen, with appreciation and admiration, Gerald R. Ford." The photograph commemorated a high moment of the 1980 Presidential campaign, the Republican Party's Prelude to Victory dinner—either a thousand or five hundred dollars a plate, depending upon how hungry you were. J.D. had started life as a Democrat, but by 1980, when he was thirty-three, he was co-chairman of the finance committee of the Republican National Committee. He was also a co-chairman of the Prelude to Victory dinner, and that was how he came to be seated at the head table.

In 1977, Beep Jennings had introduced J. D. Allen to Carl Swan, an established Oklahoma City oilman who was a close friend of Jennings and a director of the Penn Square Bank. To Swan, who was then in his early fifties, Jennings praised Allen's willingness to work hard. Even Jennings, however, probably underestimated the younger man's resourcefulness and eagerness to achieve. Quickly, Carl got a sense of how simple it was to slap J.D. on the shoulder and say, "Go at it, son." It was much like Beep Jennings slapping Bill Patterson on the shoulder and telling him, "Bill, you're a banker now." Momentum accomplished the rest. Carl Swan had assets and creditworthiness, and suddenly J.D. had an alliance with Carl. If J.D. yearned to borrow from Continental Illinois, Swan and Jennings would be his calling card. If, down the road, he felt like doing business with Seattle-First National Bank—usually called Seafirst—he could make his approach bearing the Continental Illinois seal of approval. And so on—to Chase Manhattan, Northern Trust, Michigan National, London, Zurich, Asia, Africa, Washington, D.C.

The Longhorn Oil & Gas Company, the primary tie that bound Carl Swan and J. D. Allen, was founded in 1977. Longhorn existed for the purpose of raising money and drilling it up. Measured against the standard drilling-fund company, Longhorn looked like an above-average can't-lose proposition. A minimum investment for most of the Longhorn funds was a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. (There were at least two funds per year.) The usual irresistibles figured in—low down payment, high leverage, letter of credit, immediate tax benefit, future oil-and-gas-production income. J.D. and Carl, the co-chairmen of Longhorn, each owned forty-two per cent of the company. A couple of Cities Service veterans were hired to run Longhorn's operations and exploration. When Bill Patterson, exceeding a banker's normal obligations, was touting the beauty of Longhorn to a potential investor, he would say, according to one deponent, "We, Penn Square, are not in the business of calling letters of credit. We're in the business of lending money. If we call the letters of credit, how can we lend money?" Bill Jennings reportedly once told some prospective Longhorn investors, "This deal is too safe for me"—a remark implying that he preferred a higher risk. Between 1977 and 1982, with much assistance from Patterson and Jennings, the Longhorn Oil & Gas Company, in various ways, borrowed more than eighty million dollars. Continental Illinois lent Longhorn sixty-eight million, Michigan National was good for six million, Chase lent two million, Northern Trust lent almost two million, Seafirst put up a million, a number of smaller banks collectively lent a couple of million.

Allen's vision was unclouded. What was good for J.D., it seemed, was good for J.D. Diversification, he saw, was good. A conglomeration of interrelated companies, some sort of vertical integration—that seemed plausible. During the same five-year period that Longhorn was borrowing eighty million American dollars, Swan and Allen went to the banks to finance several other enterprises. A pipe-threading-and-fabricating firm called Texas Upsetting & Finishing—Swan, Allen, and Jennings owned sixteen per cent each—borrowed ten million from Continental Illinois. Denton Brothers Drilling, eighty per cent owned by Swan and Allen, borrowed almost seven million from Continental and slightly less than five million from other Penn Square correspondent banks. High Plains Drilling Company, of which Swan and Allen also owned eighty per cent, borrowed twelve million from Continental Illinois, two and a half million from both Seattle-First and Northern Trust, a million three hundred thousand from Michigan National, a million six from Chase, half a million more here and there. The Texas Oilfield Supply Company, which was in business to do what its name suggested, borrowed fifteen million from Continental Illinois and thirty-one million from Crocker National Bank, of San Francisco. Michigan National lent it more than a million. Jennings owned ten per cent of Texas Oilfield Supply, and Swan and Allen owned almost twenty per cent each. Texas Oilfield Supply, in turn, owned part of an oil company called Olympic Exploration. Swan and Allen each held a separate twenty per cent of Olympic, and through Penn Square that company borrowed almost six million, mainly from Chase Manhattan and Seafirst. One assumption behind all this was that if, say, Olympic Exploration needed a rig it would hire Denton Brothers or High Plains. If Longhorn needed tubular goods, it could buy from Texas Oilfield Supply or Texas Upsetting & Finishing.



STUART LEEDS

Becoming highly bankable, Allen discovered, meant becoming instantly popular with incipient entrepreneurs who merely needed a financial boost to set their dreams in motion. In 1979, Charles Harding, who had been a college fraternity brother of Allen's at the University of Oklahoma, proposed starting an Anadarko Basin exploration company called Continental Resources. Allen liked the idea and, in return for ninety per cent of the equity, agreed to escort Harding to the Penn Square Bank and co-sign the company's promissory notes. Allen also agreed to let Harding and an associate run the operation day-to-day. Continental Resources was founded in January of 1980, financed with a one-million-dollar line of Penn Square credit. Eventually, the company borrowed thirteen million from Continental Illinois, five million from Seafirst, almost two million from Michigan National. Soon after Continental Resources went into business, Allen launched Texoma Resources. Its activities were to be concentrated in the Sooner Trend, a broad-side-of-the-barn oilpatch in north-central Oklahoma. The second most heavily explored oil field in the United States during 1981 and 1982, the Sooner Trend was where you punched holes if you were less eager to accumulate oil-and-gas reserves than you were to impress potential investors with your "success" ratio. The local geology rendered it virtually impossible to drill and not run into oil, but the geology was also such that few Sooner Trend wells were truly worth the trouble. Texoma Resources accumulated an eighteen-million-dollar bank debt, two-thirds of which was owed to Continental Illinois.

Borrowing scores of millions can burden a mortal, and Allen was left with no room in his life for hobbies. In what little spare time he could muster, he started companies, which created the need to borrow more money. Continental Resources and Texoma Resources were, respectively, ninety per cent and a hundred per cent owned by J. D. Allen Industries, Inc., which was, in turn, a hundred per cent owned by J. D. Allen. These two entities are not to be confused with J. D. Allen & Company, the J. D. Allen Drilling Company, the Allen Oil Corporation, or the Allen Energy Corporation. J. D. Allen, as J. D. Allen, personally borrowed more than twelve million dollars from Penn Square's upstream banks. J. D. Allen Industries separately borrowed six and a half million from the same banks. Chase Manhattan lent Allen Energy six hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. J. D. Allen & Company, meanwhile, borrowed more than two million dollars, most of which—a million four hundred thousand from Continental Illinois—went to pay for an airplane. Chase Manhattan, too, financed a million-dollar-plus airplane. The J. D. Allen Industries umbrella also took in a securities-brokerage firm, a computer company that owned some I.B.M. hardware and some oil-and-gas-accounting software, and a magazine, *Dollar: The International Journal of American Investments.* These last three companies had a combined bank debt of almost a million dollars. In addition, there was a Swan-Allen Joint Venture—good for six and a half million from Michigan National and an insignificant two hundred and thirty thousand from Chase—not to mention several shell companies that J.D. kept handy, including L-X Exploration, the Helix Mineral & Oil Corporation, the Midwestern Oil & Gas Corporation, and Cougar Exploration. Along the way, J.D. hired a public-relations consultant. Soon, J. D. Allen Industries began turning out self-advertisements: four-color printing, glossy heavy stock, plastic spiral binding—stuff that looked like a cross between an annual report and a linoleum salesman's sample book. Enthusiasm ran high at J. D. Allen Industries.

"Working for J.D., we were not allowed to prioritize," the public-relations consultant told me. "We were expected to keep all things moving in a positive direction." Allen enjoyed putting together a deal, but he was not deeply interested in administering a business. He preferred to hire people and tell them, "*This* is where *I* want to be. Make sure we get there." If you asked Allen a question that he did not want to hear, he was likely to say, "You just don't understand corporate *fi*-nance."

Brainstorming sessions were a regular thing at J. D. Allen Industries. A consensus grew that Allen needed to diversify even further. One plan was to build a ski resort; another was to customize a submarine for offshore-drilling-rig repair. A Longhorn Building was envisioned—six stories plus a penthouse for J.D. Observing him, Allen's associates had varying opinions of what his goal might be.

"The best-known independent group of companies in the world" was one view.

"I don't think there's any question but what he wanted to be a billionaire—he intended to be the next Howard Hughes" was another.

"After publishing, he wanted to branch into cable television. When it came to telecommunications, J.D. thought that eventually Ted Turner would fit into a small part of his shadow."

Together with some of his serious Republican friends, Allen bought a limited-partnership interest in the Embassy Row Hotel, in Washington. Through another Republican Party connection, he went to Asia in 1979, met some international traders from Hong Kong, had a good time, and devoted considerable energy thereafter to trying to devise ways to make the experience even more worthwhile. One proposal was Longhorn International, Ltd. ("A subsidiary of J. D. Allen Industries, Inc., actively involved in the development of energy and energy-related ventures in China, other parts of Asia, and western Europe," said a pamphlet.) Immediately after Ronald Reagan's 1980 election victory, the notion circulated through the J. D. Allen Industries headquarters that an ambassadorship would be fitting. The ambassadorship did not pan out, but J.D. did get invited to go on a trade mission to West Africa, sponsored by the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture. Twenty-five American executives—captains of agribiz and manufacturing—made the junket; J. D. Allen was the only energy-industry representative.

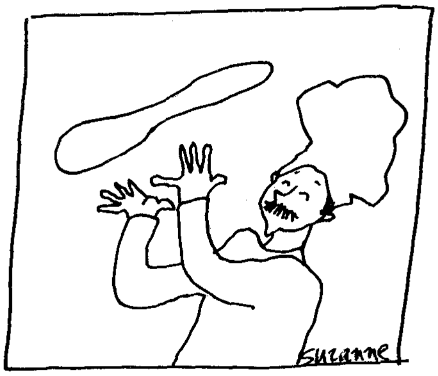
By now, Allen, who had grown up in a tiny southern-Oklahoma town called Ringling, had discovered that pastel leisure suits and ruby-studded hammered-gold watchbands were not the only finery a gentleman could own. He had traded up to Oxxford suits and tailor-made dress shirts. His foreign-travel experiences suggested to the brainstormers back in Oklahoma City that Allen should do everything possible to cultivate his intercontinental appeal, and so a path was discovered that wound from Oklahoma City to Vancouver and on to Toronto and then to London, from which it was an easy skip to Zurich and the rest of the Continent. J. D. Allen came into contact with Canadian maneuverers who could sell oil stocks or gold stocks or ham salad—whatever people might for a moment believe in—and who were connected to professional flight-capital funnellers, Swiss money managers with fiduciary heft, English investment bankers, each of whom was interested in earning a promotional fee. Western Europeans, fearful that the Soviets might develop a sudden hankering for, say, Belgium, constantly sought ways to transport wealth to America. For years, they had been exposed to the High Dollar approach, the dignified promote, but they had not really been good-ole-boyed before, had not had direct contact with many natives of Ringling, Oklahoma. You did not have to know much about the oil business to know that it was amazingly hot. During a dog-and-pony show, Allen was capable of sounding knowledgeable about the oil business. He was also capable of joking that "my belt size is bigger than my I.Q." Allen had command of the lingo. J. D. Allen was the closest thing the average City of Londoner had seen to J. R. Ewing. It was fine for him to stand there with charts and structural maps and explain why a certain oil-and-gas prospect looked good. He made an impression.

The pièce de résistance of the Allen-Swan collaboration was the formation of Continental Drilling. When this idea germinated, the plan called for construction of a forty-two-rig fleet, at a cost of two hundred and sixty-three million dollars. At some point, it occurred to J.D. and Carl that forty-two rigs might be an over-achievement, so they scaled their project down to nineteen rigs, which could be built for ninety-six million. The loan closed January 26, 1982, the day after the official drilling-rig count in Oklahoma reached eight hundred and eighty-two—its all-time high. Five banks participated in the loan—Chase Manhattan, Seafirst, Continental Illinois, Michigan National, and Penn Square. Swan and Allen each owned forty-three per cent of Continental Drilling, and each had personally guaranteed virtually the entire amount of the company's debt. A banker who attended the closing described it as "twelve guys and twenty cigars in the boardroom at Penn Square." Beep Jennings witnessed the gathering, blessing everyone present, and Bill Patterson passed out the stogies. As soon as the signatures were notarized, the borrowers and several bankers boarded J.D.'s and Carl's jets and flew to Las Vegas to celebrate. Carl Swan's pockets were full of cash. So were Patterson's. If you needed a little bankroll to start you off at the tables, Carl and Bill were good for that. The ensemble stopped over at the Aladdin Hotel, Wayne Newton's place, and everyone who wanted to shake Wayne's hand got a chance. One of the Penn Square oil-and-gas lenders sat in Wayne's dressing room and explained to Wayne how to fracture an oil well with bauxite beads. Then Wayne went out and did the dinner show.

Allen and Swan and the bankers had tables right next to the stage. They drank Dom Pérignon. From the stage, Wayne said, "I'd like to introduce you to my brother," and J.D. stood up. The people in the crowd went crazy, because they loved Wayne Newton, and, naturally, they wanted to love his brother, too. Wayne looked down at Margaret Sipperly, a Chase Manhattan loan officer, and said, "Where are you from, pretty lady?" When she said, "New York City," that was a cue for Wayne to belt out "New York, New York" more lustily than Sinatra. It was one of those amazing, gratifying nights in the merchant-banking business.

THE year 1981 was one of mysteries and marvels: my wife gave birth to our son; the stock-market analyst Joe Granville told the world, "Sell everything;" one of the daily newspapers in Oklahoma City published a story with the headline "THINK TANK SEES OIL COSTING $333 A BARREL BY YEAR 2000;" the Penn Square Bank cranked out a billion-two in loans. In 1981, the bank's promotional theme was "Growing with Energy." An electronic teller called the Beep Machine went into operation. In the past, the real Beep Jennings had come up with some lively innovations—a TV ad campaign based on "The Wild Bunch;" an unusual offer for any purchaser of a million-dollar certificate of deposit (you could receive the going rate of interest or you could have a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow)—but in 1981 the Penn Square Bank became even livelier. It became a *fun* bank. You would go see Bill Patterson thinking you needed to borrow two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and you would walk out with a million and a half. Penn Square's most intrepid customers discovered within themselves the courage to borrow to pay interest on what they had previously borrowed. Leverage vertigo was at work—paper, dollars, illusions in perpetual, disorienting motion. Concept or no concept, Patterson and Jennings must have been dazzled by how easy the whole thing was. The upstream bankers were equally surprised at how easy it was to sell money. Meanwhile, the borrowers had to cope with the novelty of having all that cash thrown at them. Borrowing to pay interest is a clear-cut symptom of leverage vertigo. The borrower is not stupid; he is just too dizzy to comprehend what has happened to the old rules. Nor is he encouraged to comprehend.

A dynamic year. In 1981, the money went out the door so fast that it literally could not be counted. These were the credits that Penn Square alumni would later defend by saying, "Hey, those were good loans when we made them." Competitors got groggy shaking their heads. "In two and a half years, they put more than two billion dollars on the books. I had five hundred million," another Oklahoma energy lender once told me. "I built mine up in eight years through a lot of hard work. Even if you don't do the paperwork, how can anyone create assets that fast?"



The regulatory history of the Penn Square Bank during this exuberant phase reads like a series of memos-to-file about a delinquent pupil in a permissive boarding school—a lad who is popular with classmates but insists upon decorating the headmaster's Irish setters with linoleum adhesive, who has a cheerful demeanor but nevertheless can offer no satisfactory explanation of how the founding-fathers diorama came to rest in the chapel belfry.

Between the time that Jennings bought the bank, in February of 1975, and its closing, in July of 1982, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency examined the books ten times. In the eyes of the regulators, these audits revealed a steady decline in the institution's well-being. And yet in the eyes of the public the Penn Square Bank appeared to prosper. During 1980, for instance, its loan portfolio more than doubled—from roughly ninety million to a hundred and ninety million dollars—and more than three hundred million dollars' worth of loans were sold to other banks. This had a salutary effect upon profits, which increased more than a hundred per cent over the previous year. Nevertheless, what the examiners found at Penn Square alarmed them. In early 1980, the Dallas regional office of the Comptroller, in an internal report, declared Penn Square "a matter of special supervisory concern." The bank was beset by too rapid growth, insufficient liquidity, inadequate capital, and an excess of classified, or potentially problematic, loans. A much briefer examination later that year revealed more of the same. The staff appeared to be "overtaxed by business volume," and "capital adequacy was deteriorating." That summer, the bank's directors attended a meeting in Dallas with a senior representative of the Comptroller. Each director signed a formal administrative agreement to "correct all violations of law and adopt procedures to prevent them from occurring in the future." Among other things, the directors pledged to stop violating legal lending limits, to stop making loans without adequate collateral, to stop lending to poor-quality borrowers, to increase capital, to improve procedures for documenting loans sold to other banks, and to file monthly progress reports with the Comptroller.

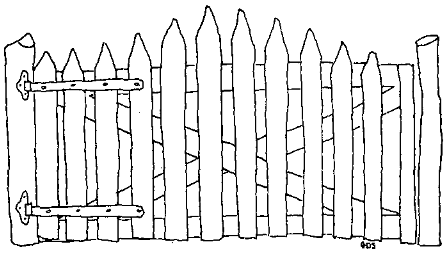
Penn Square's own outside accounting firm, Arthur Young & Company, subsequently conducted a year-end 1980 audit and rendered a "qualified" opinion of the bank's soundness. In accountantese, that meant an opinion that was less than favorable. Arthur Young & Company said that insufficient reserves had been set aside to cover potential loan losses. Evidently, the Comptroller shared this belief. At the end of 1979, the total of Penn Square's assets that the examiners had classified—had found to be dubious, substandard, or noteworthy in some other unpromising fashion—equalled a third of the value of the bank's capital. Although additional stock was sold during 1980 and the capital was thus increased, by the time of the Arthur Young audit the percentage of classified loans had risen to three-fourths of the bank's capital.

The examiners were back for a long visit in early 1981 and discovered "further deterioration in the bank's overall condition." During the summer of 1981, the directors were once again summoned to Dallas by the Comptroller of the Currency. A bank examiner reviewed ten areas of concern that had been cited in the formal administrative agreement. Nine of them, he said, had not been complied with. In unambiguous detail, he enumerated the specifics of this noncompliance. One of the bank examiner's superiors told the directors, "We find in our opinion—you don't have to accept it, but you ought to—that Penn Square Bank is flirting with disaster."

A conversation with Beep Jennings would not have revealed the existence of any of these dark portents. Not long after Jennings and the other directors learned of Arthur Young & Company's "qualified" audit opinion, Penn Square's holding company issued its annual report for 1980, which itemized the great leaps in asset growth and profitability. Jennings' message to the shareholders stated, "But figures do not tell the whole story. They indicate how much we *have* increased in size, but do not demonstrate how we have broadened and strengthened our capabilities and services to make this growth possible. . . . The Penn Square Bank of tomorrow is happening today. So this annual report also focusses on the future: on the planned growth we have in mind for our bank."

THE first page of the 1980 annual report to the shareholders, which was published in the spring of 1981, contained a boardroom photograph of five proud executives posed with a set of blueprints. The executive with the widest smile was Eldon Beller, who had recently accepted Jennings' offer to replace Frank Murphy as president and chief administrative officer of the bank. Eldon Beller was in his late fifties, tall and broad-shouldered, with a wide, imposing Western face. He had a high forehead and oiled silver hair, the look of a journeyman who was perhaps on his way to an asset-and-liability-committee meeting or perhaps on his way to fix a barbed-wire fence. Evidently, he would smile for a camera, but more often he had a wary expression.

Beller's ostensible mission at Penn Square was to make manageable a bank that had outgrown everything from its physical plant to its committee structure. The job did not call for him to be a charmer, and there was nothing of the glad-hander about him. He had spent some twelve years at the First National Bank & Trust Company of Oklahoma City, which at that time was the largest and most profitable bank in the state, and he had a conventional understanding of how a bank should operate. He understood that it is normal for a bank to have a loan policy, and that it is normal for the bank management to see that that policy is followed. It is normal for there to be a loan-review department that analyzes loans already on the books, that examines financial statements and cash flows and thus evaluates—long after a loan has been financed—whether the collateral is sufficient. In a normal bank, there is a loan committee that is taken seriously by all the credit officers. A loan officer analyzes a credit before bringing it to the committee, and then, in the committee meeting, he does a well-rehearsed song-and-dance number. The other loan officers ask questions and criticize and analyze, and then there is a vote. One aspect of Bill Patterson's magic lay in his ability to fund loans that a formal loan committee in a normal bank would welcome a chance to veto. Eldon Beller understood what is normal, and he grasped that Penn Square was not a normal bank.



Nevertheless, Beller made what seemed a sincere effort. A new loan policy was drafted. It came to a hundred and twenty-five single-spaced pages that specified procedures for loan documentation and review, collateral evaluation, internal loan auditing. Beller improved the loan-administration function (central credit files, loan work sheets, financial statements, collateral information, mortgages, petroleum-engineering evaluations); created a new committee structure, including an asset-and-liability committee, an executive-management committee, an examination-corrections committee, a loan-review committee, a credit-policy committee, and an employee-benefits committee; established a loan-closing department; and hired more than two hundred people, about a third of whom had previously worked for him at the First National Bank & Trust Company of Oklahoma City.

At First National, Beller had been the senior lending officer but not the chief executive officer. Those who knew him well regarded him as an able credit analyst, skilled at dealing with customers. He did not equivocate when he decided to replace Penn Square's accounting firm—he fired Arthur Young & Company and hired Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Company—but a natural hatchet man he was not. His duties at Penn Square called for him to occupy and administer a prescribed amount of space, to appear to be a figure of authority, no matter what the practical truth. According to his job description, as president he would "manage all of the bank's activities except the energy division." Beller had his reasons for agreeing to work for Beep Jennings. His salary plus a guaranteed bonus during his first year totalled a hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars—almost double what he had been earning. Jennings offered a five-year contract that promised Beller a quarter of a million dollars during the final year. The two men had been only distantly acquainted when Jennings asked Beller if he wanted the job. Whatever doubts or misgivings Beller might have had about working with Bill Patterson—who had worked for three and a

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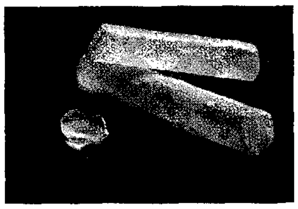

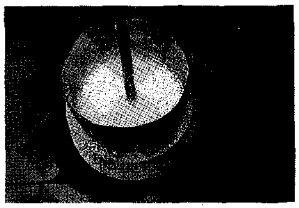

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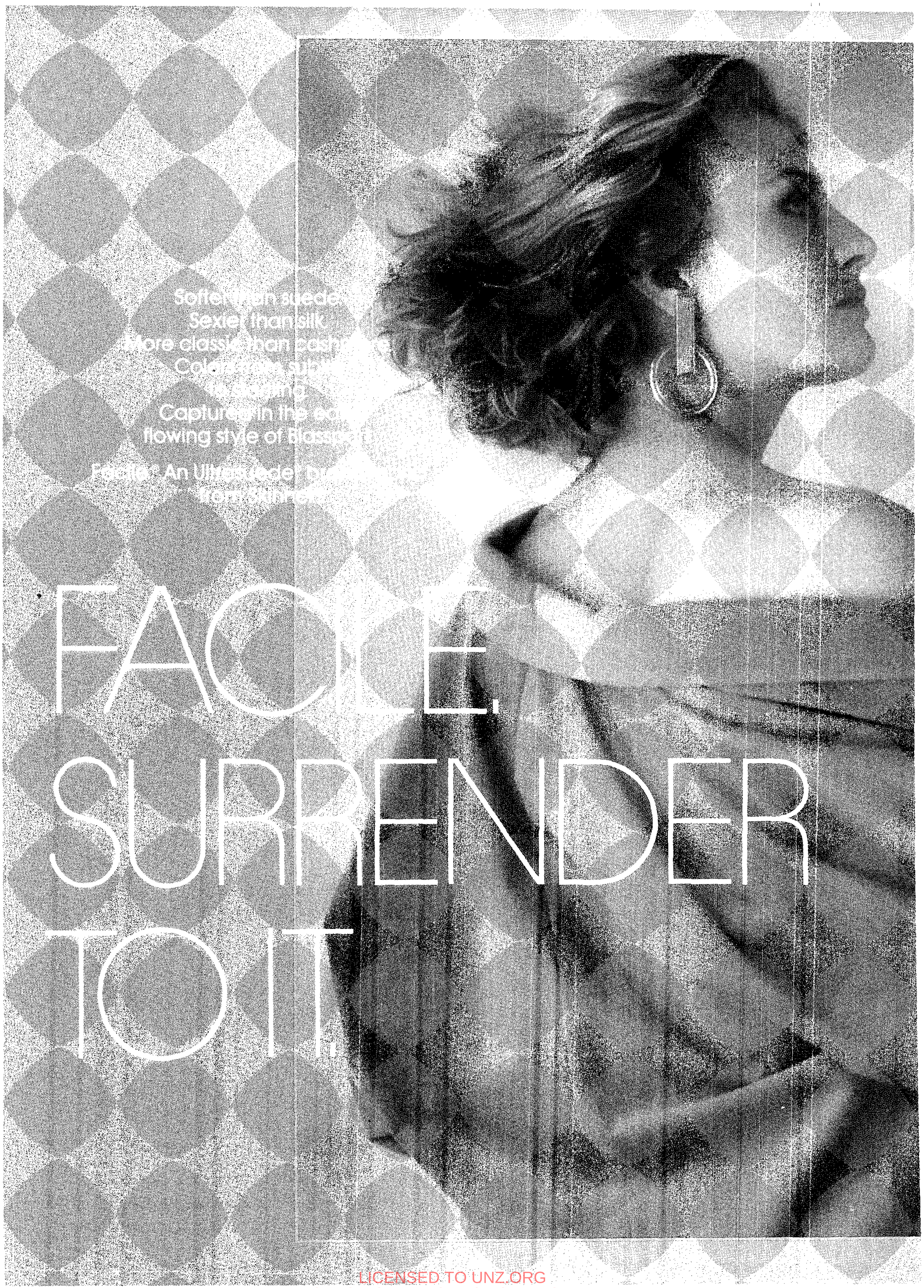

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half years at First National, where senior management took the position that "there was no way we were going to let him lend a dime of the bank's money"—he managed to contain them. When he asked about Patterson, Jennings replied, "He's been with me for a number of years, and I've taught him what I know."

For Jennings, the arrangement had the desirable effect of interposing another body, Beller's, between him and the peripatetic Patterson. The reason customers left downtown banks and went to Penn Square was that word got around that all you had to do was go see Bill Patterson. Jennings once reflected, "Our main challenge with the unique talent of Bill Patterson was to discipline him without breaking his spirit." One of the officers whom Beller recruited to Penn Square explained Patterson by saying, "Let's say you have a whole bunch of people who are driving along at forty-five miles per hour—some can do as much as seventy—and then suddenly there's this one guy who's going around the track at two hundred miles per hour. You have to slow him down, so you try to get him down to—I don't know—one thirty. Then from there maybe you can get him down to one twenty, then maybe one hundred. It's still too fast, but at least it's not two hundred. And just when you've got him down there around one thirty he all of a sudden zooms up again to one eighty, one ninety. That's what it meant to try to 'control' Patterson. No one imagined that this forty-five-mile-per-hour driver would have the ability to drive two hundred miles per hour. Abilitywise, he might not have been capable of even forty-five. Abilitywise, he was probably 'School Zone.' "

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Q: O.K. What specifically caused you to begin to question his lending activities?

A: The bizarre way in which my four-hundred-thousand or, at least in my opinion, the bizarre way in which my four-hundred-thousand-dollar loan was handled—watching Mr. Patterson in his office on December tenth, talking consecutively on two different telephones while he was trying to make a deal with us.

Q: How long were you in Mr. Patterson's office on December tenth?

A: I would say several hours.

Q: More than two?

A: Less than—plus or minus two. And they took us into a janitor's closet to make a loan with us. Two loan officers in the janitor's closet, which I thought was quite interesting.

Q: Is that what you found bizarre about the way your four-hundred-thousand-dollar loan was handled?

A: That, and the way he was negotiating what I considered to be three substantial transactions concurrently.

Q: But nevertheless you were willing to go forward on the loan, is that correct?

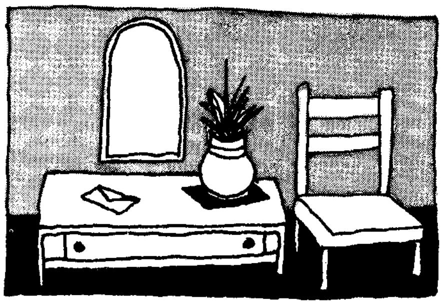
A: Yes.

—*Sworn testimony of a Penn Square borrower.*

•

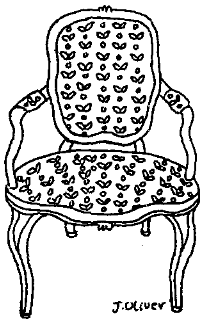
Above all, banking at Penn Square was expedient. A borrower did not have to make four trips to the bank to get his money. You could sign a note in blank and accomplish everything at once. The only problem was that often Bill Patterson seemed not to have time for details. Days and weeks would go by in a blur and Patterson would be so briskly in motion he would not get around to reading his mail. Secretaries, receiving instructions over the telephone, would end up signing his initials to hundreds of loan documents. Patterson, in his haste to get a deal done, might overlook this or that credit precept. Never lend people more money than they can pay back, for instance—that precept got overlooked.

As long as the upstream banks bought loans, it seemed reasonable to think of Patterson as highly idiosyncratic rather than in way above his head. Other officers or directors, or occasionally a national bank examiner, might express less than overwhelming enthusiasm for one of his loans, might observe that the size of the credit exceeded the value of the collateral, might dare to suggest a few changes. Invariably, Patterson's response was "Hey, that's a done deal"—meaning no way was he going to renege. To be able to work both sides of the deal so effectively, to maneuver so adroitly between borrower and loan buyer—that was a remarkable skill. Patterson knew how to go to Chicago with a bunch of deals in a briefcase and return twenty-four hours later bearing commitments for ten million dollars' worth of loans. It might be ten million dollars all in one loan, and the loan might be a ninety-nine-per-cent participation—meaning that Penn Square would lend only a hundred thousand dollars, and the rest of the deal would belong to, say, Continental Illinois. Penn Square's one-per-cent loan-origination fee would come to ninety-nine thousand dollars, and thus the bank would have earned overnight a ninety-nine-per-cent return on its portion of the credit. Most loan-sale agreements depended upon a simpatico understanding—the equivalent of a handshake. The paperwork—the "documentation"—would come later. If Continental Illinois was involved, that meant that the greatest corporate lender in the country had agreed to buy the loan. Who would dare to stand up and say that the deal was no good because a few pieces of paper were missing? The upstream bank had saved a lot of time and inconvenience, and its money had gone to work, earning two points above the prime interest rate. The lender had sacrificed direct access to the borrower, but in return the lender had Bill Patterson's implicit and explicit assurances that this done deal could do no wrong.



No cadre of Harvard Business School graduates did Patterson's bidding. Secretaries armed with high-school diplomas found themselves being anointed as banking officers and then as assistant vice-presidents. They worked for one of the fastest-growing banks in the country, one that showed fabulous earnings, that had a long-distance sprinter—a wizard who had gone from grunt to senior executive vice-president in less than five years—running the money-making end. The bank was in the habit of doubling its size every year or so. In that atmosphere, a secretary could hope to be lending a few bucks before long. When morale sagged under the burden of the work load, Patterson would remind his employees that they were the source of the Penn Square Bank's profitability. Salaries generally ran twenty-five per cent higher than those at downtown banks in Oklahoma City; and within Penn Square's oil-and-gas department they were higher than elsewhere in the bank. Most of the oil-and-gas employees regarded the remuneration as combat pay.

An administrative assistant who arrived at Penn Square about a year before the bank became extinct described a typical day. "In one day, I could realistically fund ten million dollars," the administrative assistant said. "You might have had a little pre-effort. The actual line of credit would have already been established, the promissory note would already exist, and now would come the funding. Let's say on a ten-million-dollar line of credit Chase Manhattan has agreed to take sixty per cent. I call and request, say, three million. That same day, the XYZ Corporation, a regular customer, might show up and explain that they have a lot of outstanding receivables from investors and they need three million. So we'll book three million on Penn Square's books for them, knowing that Michigan National and, say, Utica National, in Tulsa, have shown interest in buying that sort of credit. I'll call those banks and they'll both say that as soon as they have looked over the package they'll let us know. We'll send them each current financial statements, maybe a guarantee from the chief executive officer of the company, the loan writeup, a copy of the receivables that form the collateral. We'll send it out by overnight courier, and by the next day Michigan National might say, 'O.K., sure, we'll take the loan.' The loan is actually four and a half million but we've advanced only three and a half million, because that's our legal limit. When the money comes in from Michigan National, that clears the loan off our books and brings our liquidity back up. So now if some guy walks in and says, 'Look, I want to get in on this drilling deal, I need to borrow a hundred and fifty thousand dollars,' we can lend it to him.



"Patterson would call the office from New York or Chicago, and it was like he was at the grocery store. He'd say, 'Does anybody need anything?' And I'd say, 'Yes, Bill, I need a million dollars' "—the administrative assistant named an account—" 'I need it bad.' Again, he might have discussed the credit with the upstream bank, because he knew that it was on our books and we had to get it off. Bill would call me back and say that the money was on the way. It was my job to send to the upstream bank—Chase, say—a package of documents: promissory note, financial statements, security agreements, guarantees, anything that I thought they needed. When the loan-review people at Chase got to work, they might want to see the borrower's financial statement. Where it says on the financial statement, 'ten million dollars' worth of proved, producing properties,' they might want to see an engineering report. And I might have a copy of that in my desk, but I hadn't put it in the package because I hadn't thought of them needing that.

"Everything was high pressure. People were always running, screaming. It was like the stock exchange during a rally. Secretaries going nine miles a minute. You'd be taking telephone calls and typing at the same time. People were throwing things at you, saying, 'What's the deal on this? How do I handle this?' Other people in the bank would be calling and saying, 'You've got five million dollars that just came in on the wire from New York. What do you want me to do with it?' You'd have correspondent bankers calling, saying, 'Where's my copy of this? Send me my interest on that.' You'd have customers calling and saying, 'What the hell's my account doing overdrawn? I asked for that advance yesterday.' There was constant pressure. We were not banking those customers. We were brokering money."

No one accused Patterson of being boring. He knew how to make work fun. He could adapt. While entertaining a client in a fine restaurant, he redefined when it was permissible to throw a dinner roll. He kept his colleagues off balance. He had a sense of humor that made it difficult at times to know whether he was joking. When he strolled through the Penn Square Bank wearing Mickey Mouse ears and smoking a big cigar, that was a joke. When he perched on a conference table among a roomful of out-of-town bankers and howled like a hound in distress—"because if you're gonna treat us like dogs we'll act like dogs" —that was only partly a joke. The whole was pure Patterson. He did not always select material that was ideally suited to his audience. There was the time he came to work wearing a Nazi Storm Trooper's helmet, there were occasions when he greeted customers wearing a Batman hat with ears that wiggled. Critics agreed that his Nazi helmet was less funny than either his lederhosen or his cap with the duck on top. Among sticklers, none of this was regarded as the emblem of professionalism. And yet the act of watching Patterson lend money was undeniably entertaining. Even without a costume, he could do business with two customers simultaneously—one in his office, one on the phone—while propping his feet on the desk, eating a Big Mac and fries, and taking a vitamin shot. If a visitor was feeling a little run down, Patterson could arrange for him to get a shot, too. Patterson's phenomenal energy, his capacity for sheer hustle, redeemed him. He was on a roll.

The object was to keep smoking and joking and rolling, but it was not always possible to maintain equanimity. He could be fawningly solicitous one moment, abrasively high-handed the next. Customers whom he had lovingly courted months earlier would be permitted to languish in the waiting room for hours. Correspondent bankers would line up at the door. Patterson would give them about twenty seconds and say, "Sign here." He was dealing with transactions of ten and twenty and thirty million dollars. A new face would appear, a request for a million, and it would seem like nothing. Patterson might conclude, "Yeah. You look O.K. to me."

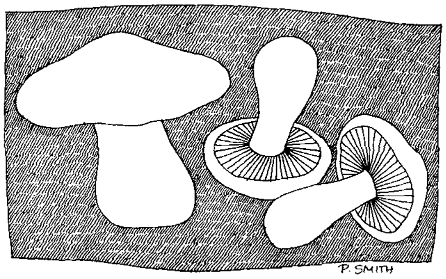
The first time Patterson flew to Chicago on Penn Square business was only the second time that, as he later put it, he "had been on a big airplane." Before long, he was flying first class. He learned how to make the most of an expense account. When Patterson hit high gear, he enjoyed company. Dropping your swim trunks while para-sailing over a crowded beach in Mexico might seem like fun for fun's sake, but, really, what's the point if there's no audience? Most upstream bankers liked Patterson. If you did business with Penn Square, you covered a lot of territory. If you banked Carl Swan, eventually you got to pet Secretariat. Bank Bob Hefner and you might get invited for the weekend to France. Even if you were deskbound in New York, there were days when the telephone would ring and it would be Patterson, jetborne twenty thousand feet overhead, saying that he was landing in thirty minutes and get ready, because dinnertime at "21" was two hours away.

Young professionals who want to do big business have to make big decisions. Just hypothetically, what do you do if you work for a bank in New York or Chicago or Seattle and last week they sent you on business to London and this week it's suddenly Oklahoma City and you look like Mr. Peepers and your plane lands and before you can claim your luggage you're introduced to four friendly females in tube tops—members of the Penn Square Bank "Entertainment Committee"—who say, "Wanna go have some fun?" What you want to do, of course, is go straight to your hotel and call your wife and say, "Hi, honey, I'm fine," and then put on your jammies and sit up in bed browsing through the Good Book that has been left in your night-table drawer by the Gideons. But big business is serious business. Pursuing a reasonable profit, reasonable people encounter occasional stress. And when it happens, what do you do? You might be a pilgrim sitting in Patterson's office trying to get answers to twenty pressing questions while he talks on the telephone. Finally, he hangs up. Before you can ask your questions, he says, "Wanna go to Junior's?"—one of the shrines of new-oilie-ism. Sure you do. You get there, and within fifteen minutes a dozen people are at the table—half of them are bankers, half are customers, a few are both. A possible objection to what ensues is that it hasn't evolved far enough beyond the glory days of Sigma Chi—Patterson's college fraternity—but with an attitude like that you might as well take your briefcase and go home. Some food gets thrown. When the first breadstick or escargot levitates, you think, Oh, come *on*. But then something inspired happens that distinguishes this food fight from one two months ago in Chicago—maybe a shirt completely covered with cocktail sauce.

After the bank closed, some journalists got busy, and these exploits entered the public domain. Defenders of Patterson arose to state that too much was made of all this, besides which the facts were reported inaccurately. He had been accused of making a spectacle of himself by drinking beer out of a cowboy boot when in fact it had been champagne out of a loafer. "I've seen him stick a pork chop in the handkerchief pocket of his suit," one upstream banker told me. Another banker swore that that was another distortion—it had been a roasted quail.

December was always the busiest time at any bank in the oilpatch. An oilman I know was involved in a two-million-dollar transaction that still had not been consummated when only two weeks remained in 1981. A downtown Oklahoma City banker who had made a tentative commitment on the deal was suddenly called away because of a family emergency, so the oilman and his partners took their request to Penn Square. In a single afternoon, Patterson heard their proposal, agreed to lend the money, and did so. It was a handshake, slap-on-the-back proceeding, culminating in a trip by Patterson to the cashier's window. He returned with a check for a million six hundred thousand dollars, the initial draw against a two-million-dollar line of credit. The oilman asked about the mortgage documents. "Patterson said, 'Don't worry. We'll do those later.' He knew me, as it happened, but did my corporation exist? Was I an officer? The fact is that the answer to both questions was no. He didn't care. He knew who I was. That was his only saving grace. I'm a reputable person, supposedly. But I could have just as easily been Willie Sutton."

Lending money in the absence of a formal loan application; asking a customer, for the sake of expediency, to sign several blank notes; lending additional funds to meet interest payments; looking a customer in the eye but not looking closely at his financial statement; neglecting to update reservoir-engineering reports; failing to require borrowers to have their mortgaged oil-and-gas-production income sent directly to the bank each month; advancing interest payments to upstream banks on behalf of customers who had not yet sent the interest payments to Penn Square—the further Patterson's methodology departed from the rule book, the more momentum it accumulated. This was "character lending" with a vengeance. Patterson appeared to be an energetic young man who was eager to get ahead in the world and had, as it turned out, been handed the keys to the bank. But what else? None of his subordinates knew all that he knew about the customers. What was true and what was less than truthful? In loan-committee meetings, he was capable of long-playing recitations of reservoir histories, well-by-well drilling reports, and production projections. Talking up a loan, he would say, "This note is to the XYZ Drilling Company, which is run by Bobby Dale Cox. He also has an interest in ABC Well Service and he's a partner with Lonnie Dwayne Speer in QRS Exploration. His reserves show a loan value of four million dollars and he's drilling a well in Grady County that's been logged and it's waiting on a pipeline hookup and he's got three others he's getting ready to start in Payne County next month"—and so on. Impressive presentations.



Having bought a customer's business, Patterson would do what had to be done to perform. A customer's assets, in Patterson's optimistic estimation, might be good for a twenty-million-dollar loan. If an upstream bank should look at the assets and declare them to be worth only ten million, Patterson would mobilize himself to find the additional ten million somewhere, even if it meant waving a wand at the collateral. Once the upstream banks gave Patterson their imprimatur, challenging him became risky. "Am I crazy to be questioning this loan?" another Penn Square officer might ask himself. "Or is the bank crazy to be making it?"

Patterson took care to remember which sellers got along best with which buyers, which upstream banks had dibs on which borrowers. There was a pecking order—what Continental Illinois would not buy he shopped around to Northern Trust, then Seafirst, Michigan National, and Chase—and there were peculiar preferences. Seafirst, for instance, leaned toward drilling rigs and away from loans secured by oil-and-gas production. Of the nearly four hundred million dollars in loans that Seafirst bought from Penn Square, two hundred million went for rigs and equipment. Similarly, Michigan National had little or no expertise in lending to independent oil-and-gas operators, but it did have loan officers who understood chattel and could presumably grasp the mechanics of an accounts-receivable loan to an oil-field service-and-supply company. Michigan National's total loan purchases from Penn Square came to almost two hundred million dollars.

Patterson made the deals with the understanding that the paperwork would follow. According to the official loan policy, before a loan went on the books documents were supposed to be gathered and properly executed: promissory note; mortgage; title; transfer order; formal credit memo; Uniform

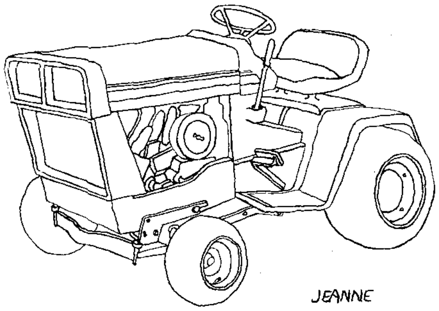
Commercial Code filing; financial statement of borrower; internal credit memo; etc. When a loan was sold, or "participated," to another bank, a copy of the promissory note was attached to the loan-participation agreement. Penn Square would hold the collateral. In theory, when Penn Square was secured the upstream lender was, in turn, secured.

When theory and practice diverged, "documentation exceptions" became a matter for concern. Documentation exceptions included all the blanks that had not been filled in, all the trips to the courthouse that no one ever got around to making. A lender could easily rationalize that documentation exceptions were not a bad thing; they were a symptom that you were doing a lot of business. If the problem became unseemly enough, however, a moratorium might be declared. Chase Manhattan, in the autumn of 1981, refused to buy any more loans until Penn Square narrowed the documentation gap. Seafirst did the same a couple of months later. Temporarily, this tactic would work, because an inability to sell loans did not fit the Beep Jennings concept. If Patterson had made a commitment to a borrower and if Penn Square could not rely upon the upstream banks to absorb its loan commitments, it would run out of money. The week before Christmas in 1981, fourteen people from Penn Square flew to Las Vegas on a Sunday night, flew to Seattle the next morning, spent two working days at Seafirst filling in the blanks on documents, and flew back to Oklahoma City. After a not quite decent interval, Seafirst was in a position to plunge ahead.

NOT long after John Lytle began to manage the mid-continent-oil-and-gas division of Continental Illinois, his department began to lead that bank in "outstanding documentation exceptions." Lytle's self-defense, obviously, was the profit motive—the big spread between the cost of money to Continental Illinois and the interest rate that the friends of Penn Square were willing to pay. Lytle could cite persuasive statistics about profits: From December of 1980 to June of 1982, the volume of outstanding loans booked by his division grew from eight hundred and thirty-three million dollars to two billion three hundred million. The portfolio acquired through Penn Square exceeded a billion dollars. Less than eight months into 1981, mid-continent oil-and-gas had surpassed the annual growth projection set by Continental Illinois's senior management. It was Lytle's impression that if that single department had been an independent bank, it would have been the third most profitable one in Chicago. The forty employees who reported to Lytle managed a loan portfolio that was larger than that of every bank in Oklahoma except one.

Not all the employees enjoyed the working conditions. In the late summer of 1981, a vice-president in Lytle's division, Kathleen Kenefick, sent to Lytle's superiors a memorandum that cited the documentation backlog. She wrote that the "status of the Oklahoma accounts (particularly Penn Square Bank) is a cause for concern and corrective action should be instigated quickly." She complained of a "lack of control of Penn Square Bank." Not long after submitting the memorandum, Kenefick left Continental Illinois. Although the memo implied criticism of Lytle, he agreed with its main points. Lytle later said, "Kenefick said we're way short of people, we're not organized, every loan ought to have a formal loan officer, let's not make any more loans until we catch up on the documentation exceptions. Kenefick claimed that I had no methodology. She was right. I didn't have one. I had motives. If someone had come to me and said, 'No more loans until you clean up the exceptions,' then I would have had a different set of motives."

In reality, there was no way to catch up on the documentation exceptions. Nor, it turned out, was all the missing documentation worthwhile—if the engineering badly misstated the reserve values to begin with or if the same collateral had been pledged against more than one debt or if an overborrower had given many creditors his "unlimited" personal guarantee. On a loan to a lease broker, the collateral might be resold two or three times before Penn Square would get around to filing its mortgage—if the mortgage got filed at all. But the Penn Square Bank was not selling documentation; it was selling done deals.



REASONABLE people can disagree about which of the Penn Square Bank's loans was the most inspired. When I ponder the sheer miracle and joy of borrowing and spending and instantly gratifying, my thoughts turn to Frank Mahan and William E. Rowsey III. Today, when Billy Rowsey explains what he thinks happened to his life during the boom he refers to the Billy Rowsey of 1981 as "a young pup." At the time, he was thirty years old and, as a matter of fact, more bearish than puppyish—six-two and potentially beefy, with brown hair and brown eyes. Both he and Mahan were homegrown Okie talent. Rowsey came from Muskogee, from old real-estate and mineral money. During the summer of 1979, he became acquainted with Frank Mahan, and by the fall they were in the oil business together—Mahan & Rowsey, Inc., a corporation whose assets were a pair of sole proprietorships called Mahan Energy and Rowsey Petroleum. Rowsey had a fresh law degree from the University of Oklahoma, and he had some curiosity about the oil business. One thing he knew: he did not intend to spend his nine-to-fives drafting oil-and-gas-title opinions. Mahan was raised in a small Arkansas River oil town called Fairfax, in north-central Oklahoma. Ten years older than Rowsey, he had sold drilling mud, had prospered as a small drilling contractor, had accumulated some oil-and-gas production. No one ever mistook Mahan for any breed of pup. He was shorter than average, wiry, graying, bearded, by nature less than completely friendly. He could be excitable. An acquaintance described him as "one of the few people who could get kicked out of Junior's."

One of Mahan & Rowsey, Inc.,'s earliest successes happened in Cleveland County, south of Oklahoma City, where, in 1980, the company leased three hundred and fifty acres that turned out to be just the right three hundred and fifty. The most prolific well, the Tanaka, initially flowed more than a thousand barrels of oil and six million cubic feet of gas a day. (Later, it settled down to about two hundred barrels of oil, and it now produces mainly gas.) In the spring of 1981, Bill Patterson and Frank Mahan met by chance at a new-oilie watering hole called Michael's Plum. Patterson said, "Let's have lunch." A week later, in the dining room of the

Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club, Patterson, scribbling on a pair of cocktail napkins, wrote agreements to lend Mahan & Rowsey, Inc., four million dollars—a two-million-dollar oil-and-gas-production loan and a two-million-dollar line of credit for lease acquisitions. They did not have financial statements showing that they were worth that much, but if Patterson was lending them the money, hell, they probably were. "I might be naïve," Rowsey later said. "I'd just always assumed that you could believe your banker. But I'd never been involved with a bank like this before." A formal master-loan agreement between Mahan and Rowsey and the Penn Square Bank never existed, but there was no shortage of paper. From cocktail napkins they graduated to blank notes—bunches. They signed the notes in Patterson's office, and there the notes stayed. No need to summon Mahan and Rowsey to the bank for each fresh credit extension; as the occasion arose, Patterson would fill in the blanks and then ask himself which upstream bank would be the most likely loan buyer.

During a seven-month period in 1981, Mahan and Rowsey went through money at a rate that would have impressed the Pentagon. They mortgaged their oil-and-gas production far beyond the hilt, started a drilling company, revived a mud company, bought two airplanes, and placed an order for a third. Patterson sold loans of theirs to Chase Manhattan, Seafirst, and Michigan National. Mahan and Rowsey took partnership and its perquisites seriously. They both drove Porsches and Mercedeses on the company tab. Each owned a house in the most expensive area of Oklahoma City and a lakeside retreat in northeastern Oklahoma—the retreats were on opposite sides of a cove. They married beautiful women who happened to be sisters. Each partner liked to play a game called Look at That Moose. Frank Mahan excelled at it. Say you were flying at twenty thousand feet in one of the company jets. Frank would point toward the window and exclaim, "Look at that moose!," and if you were dumb enough to look, Frank would surprise you by squirting ketchup at you or pouring a beer on your head. Just because Mahan and Rowsey were both Look at That Moose people, however, does not mean that they were indistinguishable. At Grand Lake o' the Cherokees, Rowsey tooled around in a sixty-thousand-dol-

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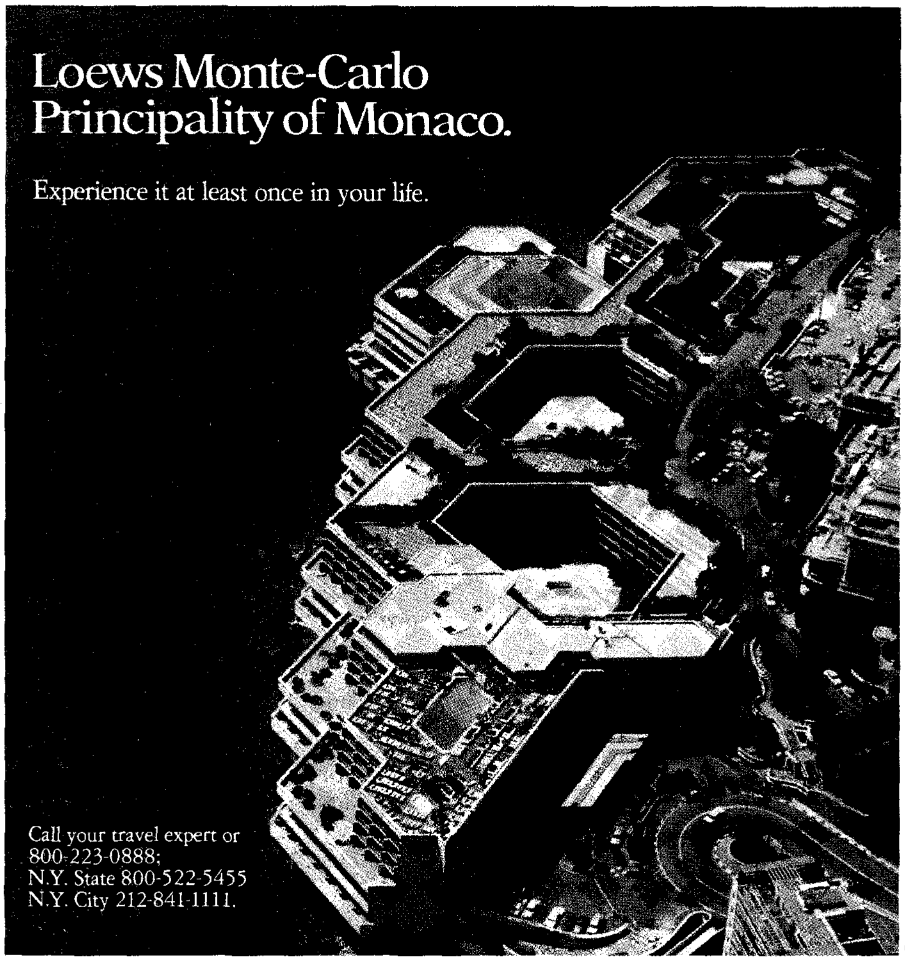
lar seaworthy racing craft called a cigarette boat. He also owned a forty-four-foot Trojan cabin cruiser. Mahan had a boat, too, but nothing quite as upscale as Rowsey's fleet. Rowsey belonged to the Book-of-the-Month Club and subscribed to *Architectural Digest*, and Mahan did not. Mahan liked to shoot guns, and Rowsey did not.

When Mahan and Rowsey entered the contract drilling business—as Mahan-Rowsey Drilling, Inc.—they did so on the theory that the best way to avoid losing drilling prospects was to own rigs, and the best way to make money in the contract drilling business was to drill deals that they promoted themselves. They bought two second-hand rigs, ordered the construction of three others, and found financing for seven rigs in all. Chase Manhattan lent twenty-four million to Mahan-Rowsey Drilling, Inc. A Chase correspondent banker travelled to Oklahoma City, rode in a helicopter to see one of the rigs at work, and was shown a fabricating yard where another rig was under construction. A done deal—Patterson assured the man from Chase that Mahan-Rowsey had contracts to drill several wells in the Anadarko Basin and that by the end of 1981 the rigs would be sold and the loan repaid. Billy Rowsey can remember once thinking, Boy, my first hundred million was easy. But long before the end of 1981 he no longer felt that way. Patterson had scared up thirty million dollars that was supposedly secured by Mahan and Rowsey's oil-and-gas reserves. Their total borrowing soon reached sixty million dollars. Debt service was running a million dollars a month—but only if you paid it. Neither Mahan nor Rowsey ever made an interest payment. Their oil-and-gas production was bringing in less than a hundred thousand dollars a month. Their only significant income was loan proceeds. Having got into the drilling business was looking sort of like a mistake. Patterson had to come up with a way to get them out.

Mahan and Rowsey could not accurately be described as detail-oriented. They began to overdraw their accounts, and the overdrafts ran as high as two million dollars. A new comptroller went to work for Mahan & Rowsey. One of the first things he noticed was that the books had not been posted for eighteen months. When Patterson learned of this, he in effect seized Mahan & Rowsey's checkbooks. Chase Manhattan wanted



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to know what had happened to the collateral documents that were supposed to secure the rig loan. And why hadn't the rigs been sold, as Patterson had promised? Some of the Chase bankers, to be honest, were not personally fond of Mahan and Rowsey. A multimillion-dollar interest payment on the rigs was overdue. Dealing with dilemmas of this sort taxed Patterson's resources. The game was Musical Lending; when the music stopped, it was time to scramble for a new lender. (The rest of the rules Patterson made up along the way.) Selling a new credit would clear any overdrafts off the books and would buy time to devise new techniques for converting dross into gold. In the past, overdrafts had made it possible to "warehouse" loans temporarily—until a robust new credit package could be assembled. A twenty-four-million-dollar overdraft, however, was beyond even Bill Patterson's alchemy.

Churlishly, Chase bore down upon Penn Square from another angle. It wanted out on the Maximo Moorings note, too. Maximo Moorings was a more-novel-than-usual Florida real-estate venture, the somehow bankable premise of which was that pleasure-boat people would rather own than rent dock space. The folks at Maximo Moorings would sell you a boat slip called a "dockominium." Maximo's master builder was Allen Senall, who had found his way in the spring of 1981 to Thomas Orr, a Penn Square commercial-loan officer who operated a sideline in race-horse brokerage. (Senall also owned horses and oil-and-gas production.) Orr delivered Senall to Chase Manhattan—Chase lent three million plus—and not long afterward Orr left Penn Square. A year later, only three of Maximo Moorings' six hundred dockominiums had been reserved. When Chase decided that it wished to be rid of Maximo, its Penn Square portfolio was approaching two hundred million dollars. The Penn Square Bank needed Chase Manhattan's good will. When Chase leaned on Senall to perform, Patterson took it personally.

In the absence of banks that would buy loans, it had become necessary to invent proxy banks. Bill Patterson was willing to volunteer for this job himself, and he was willing to recruit comrades to serve his needs. To accommodate Chase—"to preserve the Chase relationship," as they say—Patterson arranged in late March for himself and two Penn Square regulars

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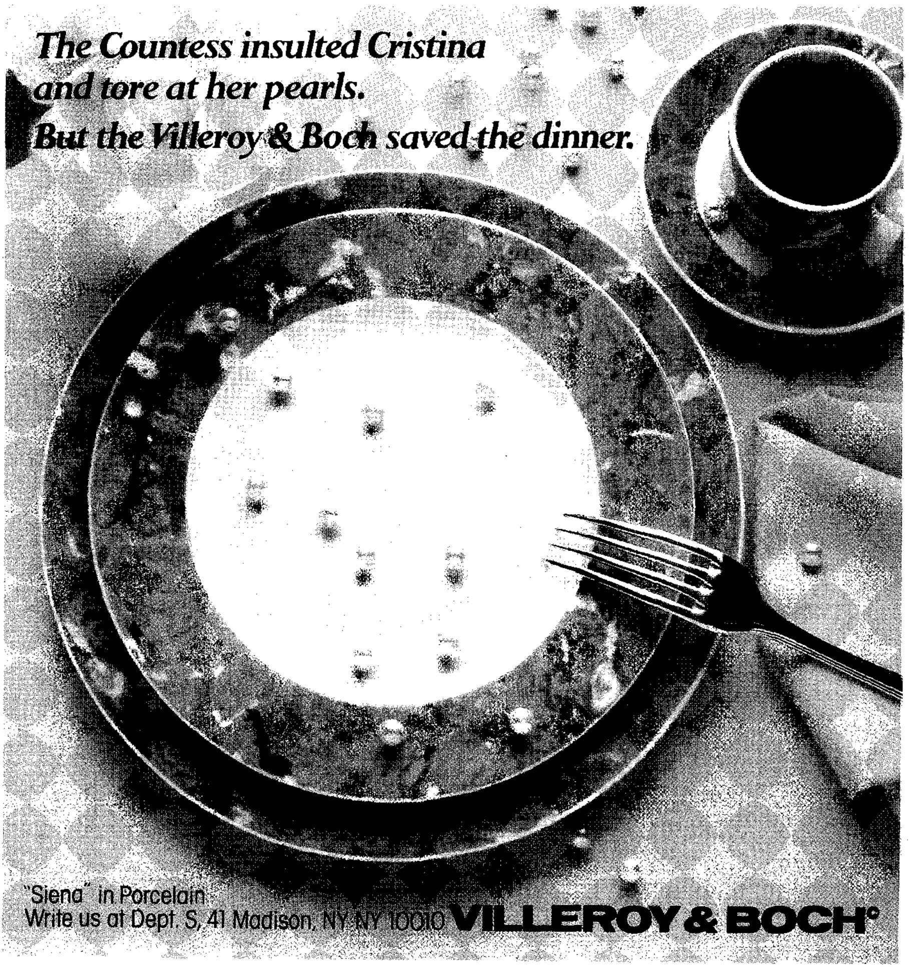
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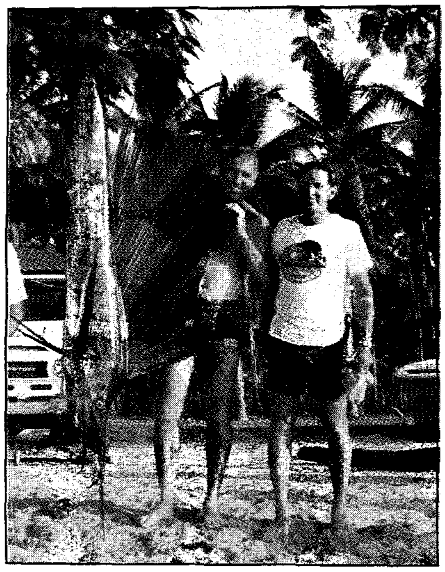

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to buy Maximo Moorings, which was renamed BGP Marina, Inc. Together, they borrowed seven and a half million dollars from Penn Square—only temporarily, Patterson promised, until he ushered another buyer in from the wings. (Pressed to name the buyer, he would mention an unlikely choice—a promoter who had already borrowed twenty-five million dollars at Penn Square.)

The Maximo Moorings–BGP Marina solution would do for the time being—would permit Patterson to concentrate upon the Mahan-Rowsey rigs. He needed another musical lender, another warehouse. The national bank examiners were due to arrive at Penn Square in mid-April. Patterson could not sell the rig loan to Seafirst, because Mahan and Rowsey already owed that bank almost ten million dollars. Nor was Michigan National a candidate. Patterson had tapped that source as well. He had met with a group of Michigan National loan officers and had described at length what terrific fellows and excellent risks Mahan and Rowsey were. ("Wild sons of bitches" was one phrase that Patterson used to commend Frank and Billy to the bankers—a tribute to their Okiesmo and all that that implied.) Michigan National had responded with six million dollars, most of which was sent to Chase to cover overdue interest. Patterson knew that Continental Illinois and Northern Trust were not interested in new rig loans and were too clever to bank Mahan and Rowsey. He knew that the new owners of the BGP Marina were heavily committed at the moment. Penn Square could not buy the rig loan itself, because twenty-four million dollars exceeded the bank's legal lending limit by about twenty million. Chase Manhattan wanted its money. *Chase.* Finally, the logical solution dawned on Patterson: the only party that would lend the money to pay back Chase Manhattan was Chase Manhattan.

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EARLY February of 1982: Some of the loan officers in the mid-continent-oil-and-gas-lending division of Continental Illinois began to ask, "What will Patterson buy back?" A loan officer named Patrick Goy drafted a list of smallish loans—less than three and a half million dollars apiece, three and a half million being within Penn Square's legal limit. Goy once described them as "little tiny deals loaded with documentation exceptions." One of his fellow loan officers called them "squeaky deals, weird deals, cruddy deals, loans we'd bought 'to preserve the Penn Square relationship.' " But if Continental Illinois wanted out badly enough would Penn Square agree to take them back? The thought that such a list existed disturbed John Lytle. The implications were dire: the hour was late, the drilling-rig count had obviously peaked, and Continental Illinois had hung out a billion dollars. Not one of the loans on the list would ever leave Continental.

•

Late February: Lytle dispatched Pat Goy to Seattle. During the last three months of 1981, John Boyd, manager of the energy division at Seafirst, had bought three hundred and fifty million dollars in Penn Square loans. That year, Seafirst's entire oil-and-gas portfolio had increased by seven hundred million dollars. Boyd and Patterson got along swell. Boyd liked funny hats, too—a Mao hat, a sheikh's headdress—and big cigars. Now Seafirst wanted to bring up its liquidity. Goy looked at Seafirst's portfolio, hoping to find loans that Continental might care to assume. Instead, he saw loan-participation agreements and realized that the other correspondent banks had bought loans far less inspiring than the ones Continental Illinois wished to get rid of. "It was a graveyard of deals we had turned down," Goy said later.

•

April: Goy was airborne, aboard an eight-passenger Learjet, on loan from a customer of both Penn Square and Continental Illinois, flying from Tulsa to Chicago. He was sitting with George Baker, the executive vice-president in charge of all commercial lending and the man thought most likely to succeed Roger Anderson as chairman of Continental Illinois. Pat Goy reported to Lytle, who reported to a senior vice-president, who reported to an executive vice-president, who reported to Baker. Baker managed a thirty-billion-dollar commercial-loan portfolio. Goy was thirty-five years old, amiable, twelve years at Continental, six months as an oil-and-gas lender. Anticipating delivering bad news to his boss's boss's boss's boss intimidated him in the extreme, but he told Baker what he knew. He described Continental's loan exposure in Oklahoma. He said that Continental had made production loans to people who had gone elsewhere and borrowed to buy drilling rigs or mineral leases. What if a cash drain in the drilling or lease-brokerage business hindered a customer's ability to perform for Continental? Goy told Baker what the exposure was at Seafirst and Chase Manhattan—a revelation. Baker said that he would check with a friend at Chase.

Earlier that day, Baker had been the host of a luncheon in Tulsa. Each spring, Continental Illinois staged a slick gathering for its major Oklahoma correspondent banks: one of the bank's economists led a symposium, George Baker would show up for lunch and press flesh, and the Oklahoma bankers would enjoy an ego massage. The Tulsa bankers cared about what Continental had been doing at Penn Square, and during this year's lunch they asked questions. Baker said, "We don't see any problem. We've been through all those loans. We've had a bunch of people down here working. We feel like we know what the situation is, and we're comfortable." In Baker's voice there was no equivocation, no hesitation. The Tulsa bankers kept it up, saying, "You've made a lot of rig loans and a lot of lease loans. We've seen a lot of rig deals, a lot of lease deals. Are you guys really sure you're right?" Yes, they were sure.

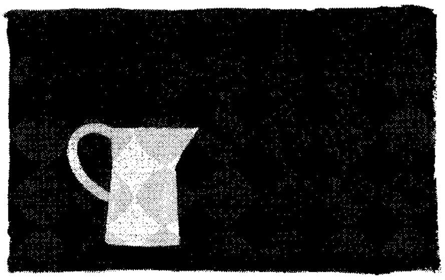
Also during April, for a few days John Lytle weighed an offer to become the president of the Penn Square Bank. Beep Jennings thought it would be a splendid idea. Lytle would replace Eldon Beller, and Beller would get kicked upstairs to vice-chairman of the board, or something. (Frank Murphy, the vice-chairman of the board, would retire early.) Patterson would shift from head of oil-and-gas lending to head of correspondent banking, and John Boyd, of Seafirst, would replace Patterson. As Beep saw it, this management team could work together quite well. But then other, more pressing business intruded, and Lytle declined Jennings' proposal.

To have a career as a bank examiner in a place like Oklahoma is to endure many character-building episodes in which the key props are a small town, a little bank, a chicken-fried-steak-and-yellow-gravy lunch well before noon in the genial company of a small-town little-bank president, and, after dark, a cinder-block motel, Wild Turkey and tap water, and a television set full of "Kojak" reruns. A sensitive bank examiner—one who is both self-interested and interested in preserving the regulatory system—learns the art of creative fudging, which is a variation on the art of going along and getting along. Enforcing every rule according to the letter does not help to preserve the system. Examiners analyze the quality of a bank's loans and they explore whether the institution has complied with banking laws. Loan quality counts. Banks do not get closed because of technical violations.

In mid-April, a delegation from the Comptroller of the Currency—four full examiners and ten assistant examiners—arrived at the Penn Square Bank, set up shop in the basement, and began a general examination. In the lexicon of bank regulation, this meant a thorough review of the Penn Square Bank's management and assets. Eight hundred million dollars in new loans had been generated at Penn Square since a brief spot-check examination six months earlier. An additional eight hundred million had been booked at Penn Square or sold upstream since the previous general examination, fifteen months earlier.

The day after the examiners arrived, the Penn Square directors held a monthly board meeting. Three partners from the accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell presented findings from a recent audit. These did not add up to a glowing rave: the rapid growth of assets continued to breed complications; the habit of rolling past-due loans into new loans without first receiving payment of interest or reduction of the principal should not be permitted; the advancing of interest by Penn Square to upstream banks on behalf of customers who were in fact delinquent in their payments would not do at all; Bill Patterson's authority was too broad and should be redefined. The official net result of the Peat, Marwick, Mitchell audit, however, was an "unqualified" opinion of the bank's soundness.

When a national bank examiner finds that a loan is in some way wanting, his duty is to decide whether to classify it, and, if he does, to assign it to one of four categories—in descending order of gravity, "loss," "doubtful," "substandard," and "other assets especially mentioned." More than a little arbitrariness enters the loan-classification process. The examiner, by his own terms and definitions, cannot make a mistake. Bankers do not enjoy losses any more than robbery victims do. Bank examiners earn less than bankers, but they are compensated by being allowed to define reality for bankers, to dictate what has worth and how much.



Stephen D. Plunk, the man in charge of the examination team, had this official title: subregional supervisor for Oklahoma City and western Oklahoma for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency of the United States Treasury. Ascending to that position had taken Plunk almost ten years. Besides seniority, one thing that he had gathered along the way was skepticism of the competence of the average banker. Some of Plunk's colleagues noticed that classifying loans seemed to have a tonic effect upon him. Observing Plunk in action, several other examiners compiled a list of "Ten Things That Examiner-in-Charge Plunk Loves to Say." No. 1 went, "This bank has never had a real exam."

It did not take long for the relationship between Steve Plunk and Bill Patterson to sink to something less than cordiality and admiration. Steve Plunk was not a Sigma Chi sort of guy. Pressing questions would arise; Plunk would put them to Eldon Beller or Beep Jennings; Jennings would instruct his protégé to provide answers; Patterson would stall, dissemble, or disappear. The urgency of walls closing in stirred and enriched Patterson's creative juices. The occasion for bold legerdemain had arrived. While the bank examiners in the basement tried to get to know the one billion six hundred million in loans that had turned up since their last extended visit, Patterson packaged harder than ever. He would submit a loan package to two or three banks simultaneously, as if putting bait in the water. The first bank that bit it bought it. During the next ten weeks, Patterson and his assistants created three hundred and forty-five million dollars in assets. Patterson began to react emotionally to Plunk's decisions that certain loans were classifiable. When threatened, Patterson would say, "Continental Il-

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linois will take care of that loan and then they'll take care of *you*." Plunk would persist, and Patterson would cavalierly reply, "Go ahead. Classify the loan. We'll just sell it." Patterson moved out of Penn Square and into the hands of upstream banks eight and a half million dollars of loans that the examiners had declared *losses*. By mid-May, Plunk and his fellow-examiners had identified only two million dollars in losses, but within a brief period of time it became possible to imagine writeoffs totalling more than fifteen million. If it came to that, a sale of additional stock would be necessary, and the Comptroller would begin to muster the leverage to force Jennings and Patterson out of the bank. As the losses accumulated, the chance that the bank might fail began to emerge in the minds of some of the examiners. Speculating upon that could not have dismayed Examiner-in-Charge Plunk.

When the examiners had been on the premises about a week, Patterson invented the second half of his solution to the problem of the Mahan-Rowsey rigs. The first half was Chase Manhattan; Chase Manhattan would put up the money to pay back what Mahan and Rowsey owed Chase Manhattan. To make that happen, however, it would be necessary to replace Frank Mahan and Billy Rowsey as the borrowers. Patterson asked himself which of his friends needed a favor as badly as he himself needed twenty-four million dollars. His answer was Robert A. Hefner III.

Bob Hefner, in the spring of 1982, stood prepared to express gratitude to anyone who could lend him an amount in the range of thirty to a hundred million dollars. The forty thousand acres that he had leased in the Anadarko Basin in 1981 needed to be drilled, or else the eighty million-plus dollars that he had paid for the leases would be squandered. Even more pressing, GHK and Mobil had an agreement that permitted GHK to buy back a fractional interest in successful wells that the two companies had drilled near Elk City. To do that, Hefner needed cash that he did not have. When Patterson approached Hefner with the idea of forming a corporation to buy the Mahan-Rowsey rigs *just for a little while*—long enough for Patterson to find a real and permanent buyer—there was a meshing of needs. Patterson assured Hefner that the rigs would soon be sold to the permanent buyer. The vehicle for Hefner's purchase of the rigs already existed: the QOL Corporation, a shell in which Hefner retained, among other things, his house and his two airplanes. QOL stood for "quality of life." As Hefner understood Patterson, he needed only to sign a note with conditions attached—a note that would not be funded until one of Hefner's associates had satisfied himself that the collateral was sufficient and properly secured. The QOL Corporation, which did business as the No Sub S Corporation, would be the ostensible borrower but would never become the long-term owner of the rigs. There would be no interest payments. Hefner had no desire to own a drilling company. QOL would function only as a loan warehouse, and in return Hefner would acquire a stronger tie to Chase's correspondent bankers. He did not want to get bogged down in Chase's oil-and-gas department; needing major money so badly, he did not have time to deal with a whole new set of petroleum engineers. Ten days elapsed between Patterson's proposition to Hefner and the closing. The QOL maneuver showed Patterson at the peak of his powers. It did not show Hefner at the peak of his.

Frank Mahan and Billy Rowsey, meanwhile, had only the vaguest sense of what Patterson was up to. Even the day of the closing, when they met with Patterson in the boardroom of the Penn Square Bank, Mahan and Rowsey did not know the identity of the buyer. Nor did they especially care. All they knew was that Patterson had somehow managed to extricate them from a horrendous circumstance. As in the good old days a year earlier, they signed whatever they were told to sign. The buyer, Patterson promised, would drop by later that afternoon to complete the transaction. The date was May 7th—two and a half weeks into the bank examination. The comptroller of Mahan-Rowsey Drilling gave a deposition some months later and was asked to characterize the QOL deal from Mahan-Rowsey's point of view: "Q. So it was a good deal? A. Hell of a good deal. I'd sell another one today."

Chase Manhattan's correspondent bankers esteemed Hefner, and they were pleased to have him as a customer. Certainly they preferred him to Mahan and Rowsey. Patterson and Hefner had agreed that the QOL note would come to thirty million three hundred thousand dollars. They had not agreed that Chase would finance the note without Hefner's knowledge. They had not agreed that Hefner would get stuck with the rigs. Twenty-four million went to pay Mahan-Rowsey Drilling's debt to Chase. Michigan National was made whole on the six million that had recently been lent to Mahan and Rowsey. A three-hundred-thousand-dollar origination fee to Penn Square was tacked on. Hefner did not anticipate that a million dollars' worth of Mahan-Rowsey payables would pop up at the last minute and that someone at Penn Square Bank would use a ballpoint pen to alter a zero to a one, increasing the loan by a million dollars. That Seafirst had lent Mahan-Rowsey Drilling almost ten million dollars and received none of the proceeds of the QOL loan, that Seafirst held a secured lien against the rigs, that no buyer yet existed to take the rigs off Hefner's hands, that that guaranteed monstrous difficulties not far down the road—Patterson must have, for the moment, isolated that information somewhere in the brainpan. When the crisis resurfaced, he would figure something out.

IN mid-June, Patterson bought from Eldon Beller, for eighty-one dollars a share, a thousand shares of stock in the First Penn Corporation, the Penn Square Bank's holding company. This increased his stake in the bank to almost eight per cent, second only to Beep Jennings'. Considering that Patterson had begun life short of cash, he had not, on paper, done badly. During the May and June meetings of Penn Square's directors, some recent loans to Patterson came up for discussion. Patterson owed the bank more than three million dollars. His annual salary was sixty-five thousand dollars. His financial statement showed that he and his wife, Eve, had a net worth of almost five million dollars. A million dollars of Eve Patterson's family inheritance had bought shares of the First Penn Corporation.

At the June meeting, Patterson's fellow-directors heard his account of several pending matters—a narrative that, in retrospect, seems to have contained flaws. There was a report about overdrafts, which Patterson said amounted to less than three million dollars. (The actual figure was sixty-five million nine hundred thousand.) Patterson stated that a certain loan to Mahan & Rowsey, Inc., was

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guaranteed by another customer. (It was not.) He said that he and the other partners in the BGP Marina expected to sell their investments to Walter E. Heller & Company in the near future. (Wishful thinking.) Describing a rig loan to Cliff Culpepper, Patterson said that the Tomcat well had been completed. (It had not.) Other directors raised questions about the bank's loans to Patterson. He had borrowed to invest in a drilling program that Penn Square had financed. Was that a conflict of interest? Beep Jennings said that this could be taken up by the bank's ethics committee, forgetting for the moment that no such committee existed.

Two days later, Jennings and Patterson joined a salmon-fishing expedition in British Columbia. Also along on that trip were the chairman of Seafirst and half a dozen other Seafirst employees, including John Boyd; Bob Hefner's son, Robert IV; and Carl Swan and several other major Penn Square customers. Later, on being asked whether along with the salmon prospecting there had been any chitchat about the Penn Square Bank's travails, everyone drew a blank.

WHEN the final examination of the bank began, Penn Square's capital stood at thirty-seven million dollars. Upon returning from their fishing outing, Patterson and Jennings were told that the identifiable losses seemed to have exceeded twenty million. Precision eluded the examiners. Patterson's ability to sell losses upstream muddied things—injected an odd variable into the calculation of how near or far insolvency lurked.

On June 21st, a Monday, an employee of GHK saw for the first time the May bank statement of the QOL Corporation. Only then did Bob Hefner become aware that the note from Chase Manhattan had actually been funded—that he had inherited responsibility for seven drilling rigs that he did not care to own. He went a little crazy. Patterson went a little crazy. Jennings tried not to go crazy. There were unhappy scenes and unhappy words. Jennings told Hefner, "Bob, you do not have liability on those rigs."

By the end of that week, Patterson's tenure as manager of the Penn Square Bank oil-and-gas division had ended. No longer was he free to play Musical Lending, but he did have permission to go out and raise capital, and that also offered excitement. Early in June, he had generated five million, then ten, then fifteen million in pledges to buy Penn Square Bank stock. He hit both coasts twice in one week. The night of June 27th, a Sunday, he spent in Chicago, at John Lytle's home. He showed Lytle a partial list of potential investors. A thirty-million-dollar loan package would do it—thirty million to be divided among twenty subscribers, with shares ranging from half a million to five million dollars. The five-million-dollar pledge had come from Hefner. The next morning, supplicant, Patterson travelled to the headquarters of the Michigan National Bank. Tuesday evening, he returned to Chicago.

Beep Jennings and Bob Hefner, meanwhile, had flown to Chicago on Hefner's Westwind jet. Hefner's purpose was to meet with some bankers from Northern Trust to discuss financing for GHK. Jennings went hoping to find thirty million dollars. On the ground, Jennings received two pieces of news. He learned that the Comptroller of the Currency had told Continental Illinois and the other upstream banks that many of their Penn Square loan participations were destined to be declared losses. He also learned that Hefner did not feel inclined to do him multiple favors. More or less in gratitude for the Mahan-Rowsey rigs, Hefner decided to remove his company's deposits from Penn Square. Mobil, GHK's partner in the western Anadarko, had prepaid several million dollars of operating costs—funds that GHK had invested in First Penn Corporation commercial paper. Twenty-three million dollars' worth of commercial paper matured on Wednesday, June 30th, while Hefner and Jennings were still in Chicago. A GHK employee went to the Penn Square Bank to make certain that the money got wired out. Part of his job was to calm the telex operator.

That same day, in Oklahoma City, a new order from the Comptroller arrived, giving the bank ten days to raise fresh capital. On Friday, July 2nd, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the major upstream banks had been told by the Comptroller that their Penn Square loans were in trouble. That same morning, the Comptroller amended his previous order, giving the bank until the close of business that day to recapitalize. The examiners now brandished a machete, and with each stroke of its blade the capital needs grew. The first liquidators from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corpo-

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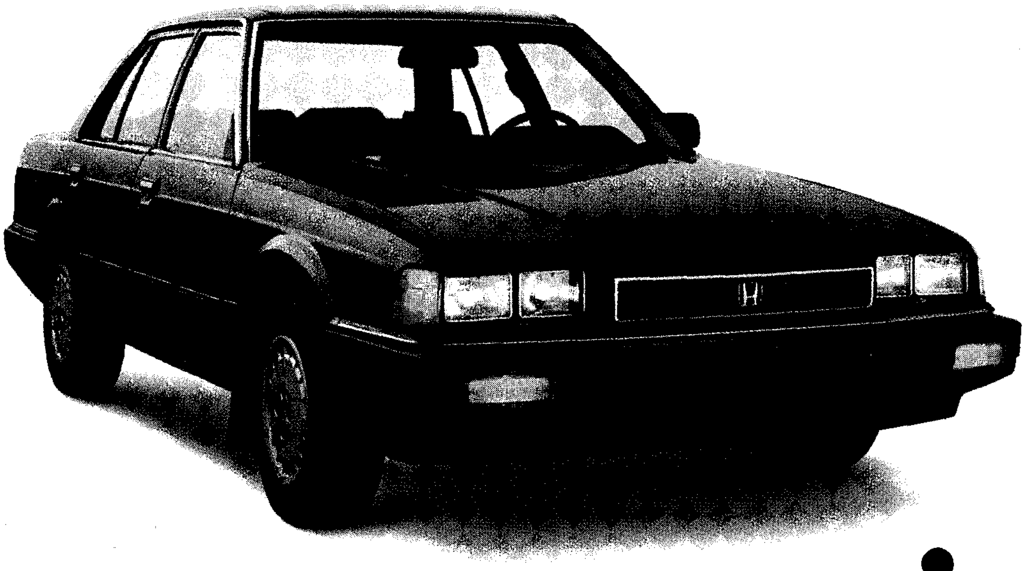

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ration began to arrive. Sitting inside the Penn Square shopping mall, eating a hot dog and drinking a lemonade, you could watch these people pulling up in taxis. By now, Hefner's withdrawal was no secret. Jennings delivered a statement to the press that contained the phrases "routine examination," "open for business," and "we have problem loans like everyone else." Ever the optimist, he told one of the local newspapers, "Despite the rumors that have been rampant, it's not all that tough here."

That weekend, the numbers changed by the hour. Representatives of the major banks met in Washington with Paul Volcker, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board; William Isaac, the chairman of the F.D.I.C.; and C. T. Conover, the Comptroller of the Currency. One proposal had Penn Square's shareholders relinquishing their stock and Continental Illinois taking over the bank. Another called for several upstream banks and the F.D.I.C. to assume control in a joint venture. What stood in the way of all such options was a blind calculation. Even if you could exactly predict loan losses and fix the value of Penn Square's assets, you could not measure Penn Square's uncertain liabilities. Whoever bought Penn Square's assets would also be asked to inherit a black bag labelled "Contingent Liabilities." Outstanding loan commitments seemed to be in the range of four hundred million dollars. Those commitments, along with the knowledge that there would be fraud claims against the bank, made the contingent liabilities a wild card. There was no way to look inside the black bag and discern the value and meaning of its contents.

Inside the Penn Square Bank, a reasonable reaction—panic—obtained. And why not? The regional bank examiners, the chicken-fried-steak-and-yellow-gravy crowd, had never seen anything this big before, had no experience with a bank closing, much less a full-scale liquidation. A strange brew: the big boys in Washington, D.C.; a separate council within the Federal Reserve Bank in Kansas City; the liquidators assembling in Oklahoma City; the regional bank examiners inside the Penn Square Bank; Jennings and his fellow-directors and officers and attorneys huddled in their bunker; the upstream bankers stranded in Michigan, Seattle—the merchant-banking outposts. It was as if a bunch of chemistry students, their vision restricted by safety goggles, worked busily away in a laboratory, each one conducting a different experiment; each within its individual limitations was not dangerous, but then the experiments cross-pollinated, fumes migrated from one lab station to the next, there was no teacher in the room to supervise, just a bunch of callow chemistry studenKABOOM! KABOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Four of the five upstream banks—all except Michigan National, which had excused its people for the Independence Day holiday—conducted a weekend photocopying marathon inside Penn Square, gathering the loan documents that they had previously managed to live without. But even at Continental Illinois, which had the most to lose and had had the most forewarning, no one seriously expected a liquidation. John Lytle put a bunch of documents on an airplane in Chicago Saturday night. Sunday, the Fourth of July, was a beer-and-balloons family day in his neighborhood, on the North Shore. Monday was a day off. Monday night, by phone, he received instructions not to come to work for a while. At Chase Manhattan, when the lawyers were summoned and Penn Square was mentioned, the lawyers' initial reaction was that "some bank in Philadelphia had a problem." The official closing took place at 7:05 P.M., on Monday, July 5th. A senior staff person from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency entered the boardroom, adjacent to Beep Jennings' office. Eldon Beller was there, as were two of the bank's attorneys. Jennings was given a list of charge-offs totalling forty-five million dollars: on the basis of the examiners' conclusions, the bank was insolvent. Then Jennings was handed the order to liquidate the bank. Beep read the list and the order and said very little. The thought occurred to him that half of the charge-offs were still good loans. Or perhaps he was mistaken. Jennings went home, assembled his family, and shed some tears. "There is bad news and there is good news," he said, demonstrating once again the stuff he was made of. "The good news is we no longer have an estate-planning problem."

IT happened that on July 6, 1982, the day after the Penn Square Bank went out of business, the Vice-President of the United States was scheduled to address a political luncheon in Oklahoma City. Heedless of the local

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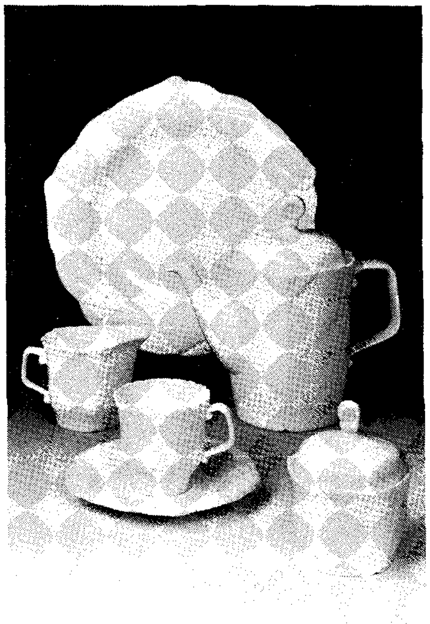

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wind conditions, he delivered his prepared text.

"I believe I bring some good news," proclaimed George Bush, effervescing. "The recession has been deep—deeper than we had anticipated—but the recession is over. I can tell you that recent economic indicators show that the recession has bottomed out, economic recovery is under way and gaining momentum." The room was full of Republicans—J. D. Allen, that stalwart, sat in his usual spot at the head table—and they were slow to applaud. Wrong timing, perhaps. Definitely the wrong place.

A few weeks later, I was having dinner with friends at a restaurant in Oklahoma City. We were drinking frozen margaritas and eating chicken-fried steak presented in a nouvelle-cuisine manner. One of my friends, an interior decorator, said, "We had a good town started." He shook his head. "But it blew up." Plenty of people in Oklahoma City simply did not see how a national bank—a Beep Jennings enterprise, no less—could be put out of business just like that. Absorbing what it all might mean posed a challenge. An easy first reaction was "This is just one of them things that'll happen, I guess."

The complication was that this thing had only begun to happen. The instant that the Comptroller of the Currency and the chairman of the *F.D.I.C. agreed to close and liquidate* the bank, Penn Square's stockholders were wiped out and the uninsured depositors stood to lose a bundle. Money brokers—professional megabuck jobbers who, for a fee, steer pension and credit-union funds in the direction of the highest "prudent" yield—had invested a hundred and twenty-five million dollars in Penn Square certificates of deposit. In this manner, an impressive proportion of the loans that the Penn Square Bank made and sold were funded by individuals who to this day do not realize that the bank existed. Looking at the immediate debris, a cynic could ask whether anyone was truly worse off than before the boom. These victims—weren't their wounds self-inflicted? Was it not as if a church congregation had committed arson upon its own house of worship?

The Penn Square Bank deserved credit for prolonging the good times and for exacerbating the crummy ones. Nationwide, the tally of active rotary-drilling rigs peaked in December of 1981, at four thousand five hundred and thirty. The high point of the Oklahoma rig count—eight hundred and eighty-two up and running—was not reached until a month or so later. From there, it was a free-fall. By the spring of 1983, the count was down to two hundred and thirty-two. With the decline in the rig count came a decline in the cost of exploration—contract drilling, pipe, mud, supplies—and also a redrafting of the rules. Banks began to advertise escrow services for joint drilling ventures—a sacrilege in a business where in the past an oilman's word had sufficed to make him creditworthy.

THE newest oilies had started with nothing, had borrowed everything, and—on the correct theory that the worst they could do was break even—had spent their borrowed funds with alacrity. I collected vignettes:

There was the one-million-dollar Toronado. A big New York bank, it was said, held a million-dollar participation in a loan to a lease broker. When the borrower failed to perform, the big New York bank sent someone down to Oklahoma City to find out what was going on.

"What happened to the leases?" the banker asked.

"I never bought 'em," said the borrower.

"Wait a minute. What do you mean, you never bought them? Our agreement with Penn Square says that *that loan is secured by those leases,* the unlimited personal guarantee of the borrower, and other personal property, including a 1980 Oldsmobile Toronado. What happened to your unlimited guarantee?"

"I'm broke."

"What happened to the money?"

"It got spent."

"It got spent! You mean to tell me I've got a million bucks tied up in a 1980 Toronado?"

"Hell, no. I sold that car last year. You haven't got a goddam thing."

A new strain of Okiesmo emerged. Although it might no longer be feasible or tasteful to brag about how much you were preparing to borrow or how many aircraft you owned, Okiesmo could also thrive upon hopeless stoicism—"My bankruptcy lawyer's better than yours." . . . "I'm hog-tied tighter than you." . . . "I'm runnin' for pres'dint of the C.I.O. That's 'cause ever'body I see I owe." Beyond the garden-variety crash-and-burns were the exotic flora. I read in the newspaper about an oilwoman named Donna Rose Willis, who operated sever-

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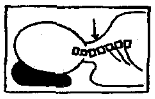

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al ventures, including one called Tycoonette. When she filed her bankruptcy petition, the liabilities included the potential claims of everyone who had invested with her and might someday feel inclined to sue her. The total came to two hundred and sixty-five million dollars. A lot of these unhappy investors had heard about Mrs. Willis through church; they were mostly Nazarenes. When the investors' names turned up in print, many came forward to complain that Mrs. Willis did not owe anywhere close to what she claimed she did. She had just made up the big numbers, it seemed, to embarrass those people.

As the mundane-bizarre tales proliferated, I would write notes to myself: "Remember to ask So-and-So how he came to owe the F.D.I.C. almost a million bucks." How charmingly naïve! In time, with the litigation building steam, my standards rose, and I refused to be distracted by any lawsuit that involved less than eight figures.

Reading the newspapers, following the reports of bankruptcy filings, gathering hearsay, I encountered familiar names. I noticed which former Little League baseball teammates from my boyhood in Tulsa were on the ropes or close to it. The shortstop owed twenty million but remained afloat. The left fielder, owing more, had run off the road and into a deep ditch. With envy and empathy and a sense of relief, I developed a suspicion that if I had been living in Oklahoma during the boom the only thing that would have kept me out of permanent trouble would have been leg irons and a cell in a preventive-detention facility for probable deadbeats. Still, I was haunted by the knowledge that I could have borrowed five million during the boom, buried it in the back yard, and, come the bust, dug up four million and carried that over to the F.D.I.C., which would have gladly settled for eighty cents on the dollar.

THE bankruptcy bar was, of course, the place to be. Suddenly, the bankruptcy lawyers occupied center-aisle seats in the orchestra section. Literally. Amarex, Inc., a publicly owned exploration-and-drilling-fund company, the seller during a four-year period of a hundred and sixty-five million dollars in subscriptions, a major customer of the Penn Square Bank and of Continental Illinois, held a creditors' meeting in the Civic Center Music Hall. During 1983, bankruptcy fil-

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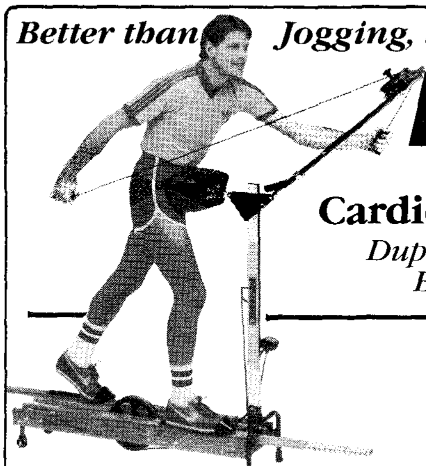

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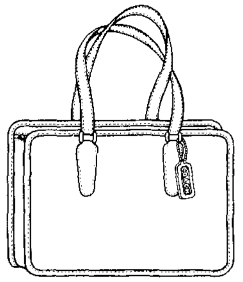

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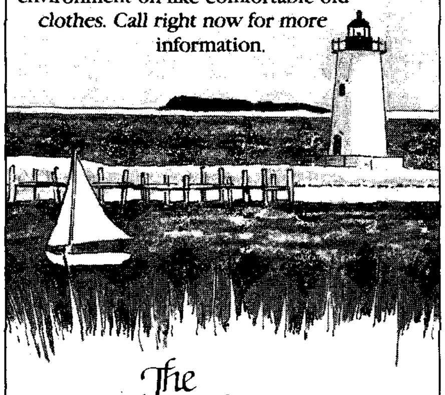

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ings rose at a faster rate in the United States Bankruptcy Court for Western Oklahoma than in any other jurisdiction in the country. Oil-and-gas employment declined by a third; the statewide unemployment rate doubled. Within a year of the bank failure, more than a hundred and fifty companies that had banked at Penn Square, with debts to the F.D.I.C. totalling three hundred and fifty-two million dollars, filed for bankruptcy.

The closing of the bank precipitated a softening of the local market for polo ponies and racing thoroughbreds and quarter horses. One of Penn Square's busier customers, Kenneth E. Tureaud, had to give up not only his horses but also his three airplanes (including John Wayne's old Jet Commander), a box of rubies and emeralds, a hundred and fifty-five Picasso etchings, eleven condominiums, some Florida oceanfront, twenty copies of a Salvador Dalí print called "Chevalier Surréaliste," and a couple of dozen LeRoy Neiman prints, paintings, and drawings. Tureaud's bankruptcy was messy. The man and his various enterprises had at least fifty-one bank accounts. He was one of those out-of-staters who can smell a friendly bank from two thousand miles away. I asked an attorney who had studied Tureaud's career to explain his methodology, and the answer was "Very simple. He borrows money and he doesn't pay it back." (When Bill Patterson promised his fellow-investors in the BGP Marina that a permanent buyer would be along any minute, one prospect he had mentioned was Ken Tureaud—overlooking the fact that Tureaud already owed Penn Square and its correspondent banks twenty-five million dollars.) If you wanted to nitpick, you could criticize Ken Tureaud for being too much of a Renaissance man, not enough of a specialist, not a purebred oilie. Tureaud had been around the real-estate game for years, had dabbled in precious metals, but his greatest idea by far was Acry-Dent ("the quonset huts of false teeth"), and when I think of him—always with fond sorrow; he died in an automobile accident in 1984—I think not of a would-be wildcatter but of a visionary who wanted to do whatever he could to lift up the forty per cent of the earth's population that is toothless.

Anyway, Tureaud's horses went on the market. One February night, I drove out to the Oklahoma City fairgrounds to witness the dispersal. The air was chilly, but the sale barn felt cozy. Five hundred people had squeezed into bleachers that could have comfortably accommodated three hundred. A lot of the onlookers wore scarlet or purple or electric-blue satin jackets with script embroidery on the back: "Mr. Thunder Moon," "Oklahoma City Nite Rodeo." Surveying the gathering, you could not necessarily tell who had money. The lawyers and the C.P.A.s were identifiable because their tweed jackets had leather elbow patches. I saw Western women in real tight Levi's and Western men in pearl-gray Stetsons. I heard conversations that went like this:

"Harr yew!"

"Hey, how you doon there, buddy?"

"Well, whadya know, boy?"

The dialogue might have progressed further, but someone would always point out that the Western men were blocking the aisle. So they would tell each other, "Hey, gooda seeya." They had huge hands with broad, flat fingers, and they wore silver-and-gold belt buckles so heavy they stooped slightly as they shuffled on.

Before the bidding started, I walked past the horse stalls. I spent a long time admiring Cute N Blonde, a beautiful three-year-old palomino filly. She wore a red ribbon halter and had red wool pom-poms in her braided mane. Her honey-blond tail had been brushed out full. The number "14" was stencilled in white paint on her left flank. I had difficulty accepting the idea that something that gorgeous was being sold in distress.

"BANKRUPTCY practice is real simple," a lawyer told me. "Only two ways you can go: reorganize or liquidate. The tricky part is getting the cases." Now that part had become less tricky, because there were cases to spread around—many varieties, some marginal, some not-so-close calls. The mainstream oil-and-gas Chapter 11 petition listed on the liability side a bank or two; three or four pipe-and-supply companies; three or four well-site-service companies, ranging from Schlumberger to Mac's Welding, in Wewoka; a hot-shot service; a mud company; a drilling contractor; an accountant; two diesel suppliers; an engineering firm; working-interest owners; an airline charter service; MasterCard; the Internal Revenue Service and the Oklahoma Tax Commission; and attorneys. The creditor who owned the hot-shot outfit was a poignant case. Hot-shotting is oil-field errand running. You call a

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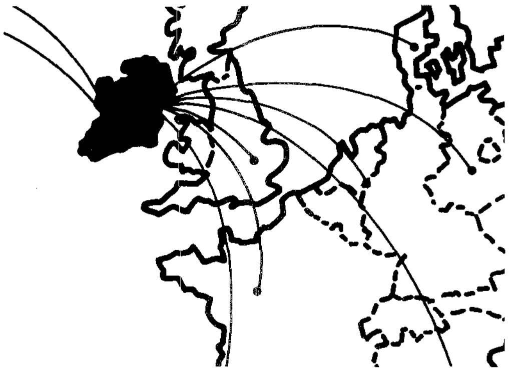

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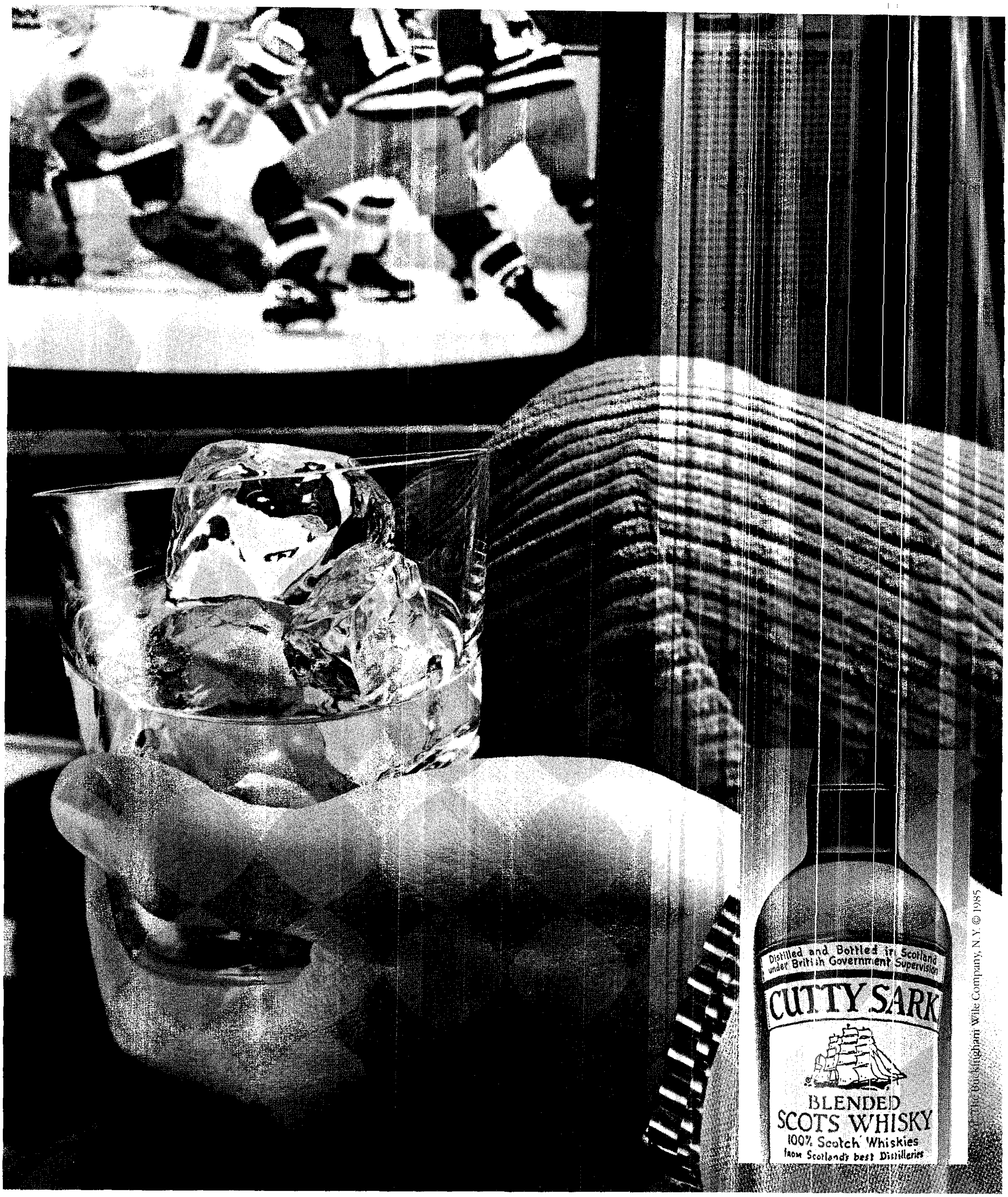
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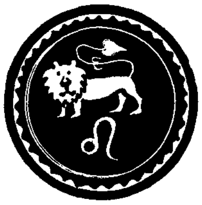
hot-shot company when you need right now to move a nipple or a flange or a float shoe from a supply yard in Oklahoma City to a well site a hundred and twenty miles away. The hot-shot outfit was owned by a good man in his late thirties who had borrowed money to buy a couple of trucks, would have mortgaged his house if for some reason he had not been living in a trailer, had opened a dispatching office and hired three or four women to keep the books and talk on the phone and four kids right out of school to work the midnight-to-dawn jobs. Business was great. It looked like time to branch out, maybe buy a couple of tank trucks and start hauling brine or diesel. Then the entire state's credit froze and overnight everyone's receivables became uncollectibles, and the hot-shotter realized that he was a victim of a new disease called liquidity gridlock. The only thing left to do was to consult an attorney. You added up your liabilities, and if you had assets you had to go through the formality of proposing a way of paying back some of the money. The Okiesmo wags said, "It's a great time to be in the oil business if you're not broke."



Ancillary industries percolated. You could sign up for weekend training seminars with titles such as "Creditors' Rights in the Oilpatch" and "Bankruptcy: A Look at Chapters 7 & 11 from All Angles." All this was a lawyers' relief fund, a fifteen-year annuity. The F.D.I.C., in the name of Penn Square, sued most of the names in the phone book. And vice versa. The directors and officers of Penn Square got sued by credit unions and drilling-fund investors. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, the bank's accountant, was sued by, among others, credit unions and money brokers. Not every oil-and-gas operator had followed every letter of the securities laws. Others had drilled dry holes. If a Penn Square connection existed, the natural thing to do was to holler fraud and sue. Everybody and his dog sued Longhorn Oil & Gas, Carl Swan, and J. D. Allen. If the F.D.I.C. or an upstream bank that had lent money to a drilling-fund operator tried to call an investor's letter of credit, the investor rushed to court and demanded a restraining order. Litigants spread all over the map, and when their attorneys started showing up at the federal courthouse in Oklahoma City the place developed a distinctly charcoal-gray tone, as if a morticians' convention had settled in.

Oklahoma City had by no means enough lawyers to handle all the new business. It spilled over to Tulsa, Houston, Dallas. Then, there were the polished retainers of the various upstream banks—litigators who specialized in "workouts," which is the art of making a borrower's insufficient assets satisfy the claims of creditors. The dislike of the opposing lawyers for one another was naked. One of the few things that they could agree upon was that a custom-designed hell should be built for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The F.D.I.C. lawyers and liquidators did not mind taking extreme stands and refusing to yield. They would define "reasonable" and then they would sit and wait for their adversaries to capitulate. As receiver of a bankrupt estate, the F.D.I.C. operated upon the premise that the receivership should be served first and last. No one at the F.D.I.C. knew how oil-and-gas financing worked; no one acknowledged the importance of cash flow; no one understood the classic and unavoidable pyramid of the typical oil-and-gas borrower; no one seemed to care how a loss of credit would damage the value of collateral. Wherever cash or collateral could be found, the F.D.I.C. intended to be at the head of the line. Later, when the damage became evident, the liquidators would shift the blame to the Comptroller of the Currency, who had permitted a monster to mature at the Penn Square Bank and then had given the F.D.I.C. people so little time to prepare for the task of unravelling and liquidating. Over all, negotiating with the F.D.I.C. seemed far less enjoyable than doing business with Beep Jennings and Bill Patterson in their carefree days.

One afternoon several months into the liquidation, I sat in a third-floor office in the bank. The office had once belonged to Beep Jennings, but its current occupant was a senior career employee of the F.D.I.C. His name was Thomas Procopio, and his title was chief liquidator. By the time of this meeting, I was well aware that if the F.D.I.C. were a person you could not invite it to a gathering of strangers and expect it to make a bunch of friends. I was aware that the day after the bank closed, Procopio's predecessor as chief liquidator had circulated an edict instructing Penn Square's former

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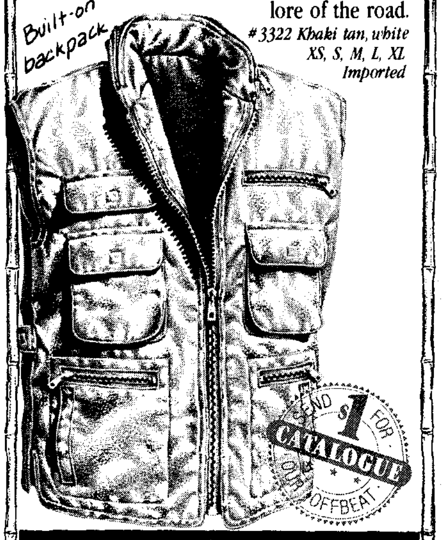
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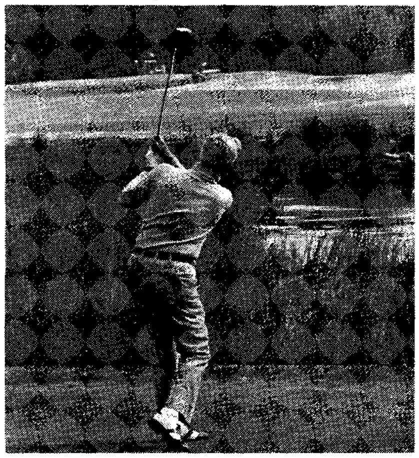

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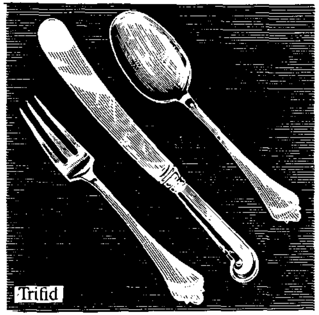

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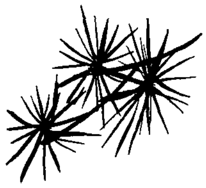
employees, now suddenly on the payroll of the F.D.I.C., to turn in their "From the Desk of" memo pads—a gambit not likely to set a tone of trust—and that this man had enjoyed making remarks such as "I don't have to be reasonable, and I'm not going to be." As I chatted cordially with Procopio, however, he did not strike me as unreasonable. He struck me as a lumpish, fortyish guy who had a graying beard and an informal manner and a decent sense of humor. I noticed that on a shelf behind his desk there was a photograph of a gorilla with the caption "Patience My Ass . . . I'm Gonna Kill Something," but I took that for irony. I was caught off guard, therefore, when not long into our conversation Procopio told me that he regarded the Penn Square Bank as "the core of evil."



I asked him what that meant.

"They didn't want to play by the rules," Procopio said. "They didn't want to stay in their environment and be a good shopping-center bank and serve the needs of their community, which is why they were given a charter in the first place."

A colleague of Procopio's named Paul Heafy had joined us. "This bank was the rich, spoiled kid on the block," Heafy said. "I supervise ten people who used to work for Penn Square and now work for us who make more than I do. These guys didn't even bother to repair things that broke. They'd buy an I.B.M. Selectric typewriter and if anything went wrong they'd stick it in a closet and buy another one. They had a closet full of those typewriters. They filled that one up and then they filled another one. They ended up with two closets full."

"I know there are good people in the oil business in Oklahoma," Procopio said. "I think some of them banked here. They are people who got in on the boom and built up a business without having any business sense. A good bank would have recognized that about them and helped them keep their accounts in order. There were some of those people who can just smell oil, you know. They're very good technicians. But they're not very good managers of people and their destinies."

The conversation proceeded in this vein for about half an hour. After Heafy left the room, Procopio and I stood at the window. The view was to the north. We could see the parking lot beneath us, then a broad field of weedy red hardpan, a creek bed, a stand of young cottonwood and blackjack-oak and redbud trees, a line of stockade fences, and a row of houses. "I think about my forty-three thousand dollars a year," Procopio said, referring to his government salary. "And then I think about the guy who used to be in this office, who was making five hundred thousand. He had this big little city in the palm of his hand, and if he had only wanted to go the straight and narrow this bank would have become what he wanted it to become."

I wanted to ask Procopio how he had come up with the figure of five hundred thousand—I thought it was too low. I knew that his "core of evil" theory contained flaws, but I did not know how to respond. As we spoke, a dozen or so F.D.I.C. investigators were in the basement and next door, in what had formerly been the Penn Square Bank oil-and-gas department, examining thousands of documents, assembling files, trying to figure out what had happened from the outset. When these investigators came up with something provocative, they would refer it to the United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, who would share it with the F.B.I., hoping to make it presentable to a federal grand jury. I thought, Did the Comptroller of the Currency have nothing to answer for? Were the upstream banks, with their master plans for growth, without culpability? Was not greed a universal instinct? How did evil enter the picture? In my mind, "evil" implied bad men with big ideas. Did the government seriously believe that whatever had happened at the Penn Square Bank had been *planned*? Did not the dementing mess downstairs indicate that Beep Jennings and his subordinates lacked the smarts to close a loan properly, much less premeditate and execute an international financial swindle? Did the government have a sinister theory of why Penn Square, a merchant bank, had sold loans? Well. In the land of oil and gas, in the wake of boom and bust, one's moral barometer broke easily. Perhaps a juicy conspiracy theory merited a counter-conspiracy theory. Who had dispatched these spiteful bureaucrats with their vinyl briefcases and their lower-crust credit cards, anyway? Perhaps the people who wanted to punish a friendly, God-fearing oil-and-gas-lending bank in the American heartland were charter members of the cabal that controlled the money supply and met for lunch every Thursday inside an ivory tomb somewhere along the Boston–New York–Washington megalopolitan corridor. Once you had crossed the threshold into the core of evil, many fantasies became plausible.

On the way home from Procopio's office, né Beep Jennings' office, I stopped at my neighborhood supermarket to pick up some things for dinner—about ten dollars' worth. While I was standing at the checkout counter, an elderly gentleman who was wearing a blue baseball cap turned to me, held out his Winners' Jackpot Double Bingo ticket, which he had not yet punched, and said, "You want twenty-five thousand dollars? Here." I accepted it with gratitude and with the implicit understanding that should the two of us ever meet again at that same Safeway checkout counter I would try to remember to pay him back. At home, there was a postcard from some people in Connecticut, typed neatly and mailed first class. It suggested that I turn my tax dollars into liquid gold. It said that piling up profits was a matter of knowing what to do when, that I could win a hundred thousand dollars in the U.S. Gov't oil lottery, and that the lottery was a well-kept secret. I could be rich tomorrow, there was no obligation, each day I waited could be costing me a fortune, and if I would send my phone number to Connecticut someone would send me a confidential report titled "The Oil Crisis: Myths and Facts." I sent my phone number, and I am still waiting.

—MARK SINGER

(*This is the second part of a three-part article.*)

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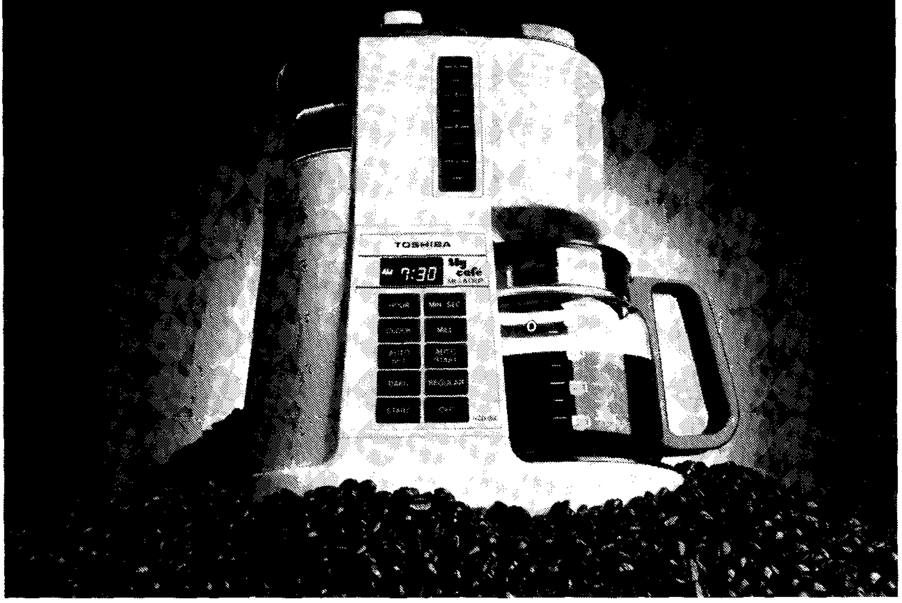

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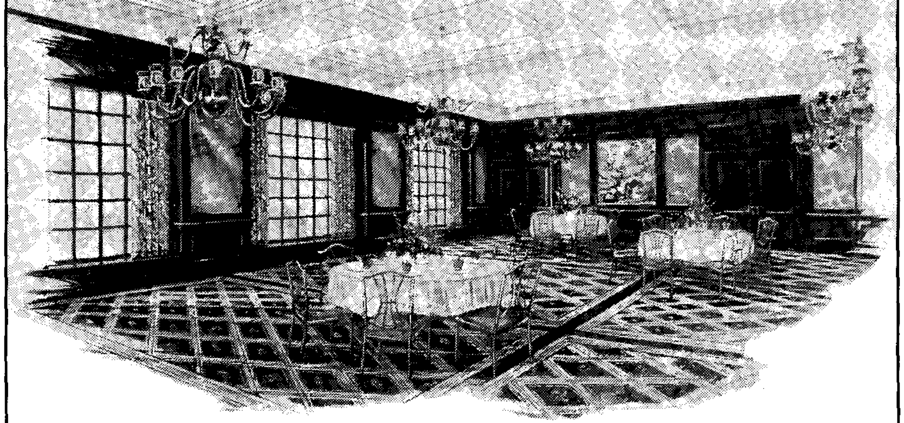

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

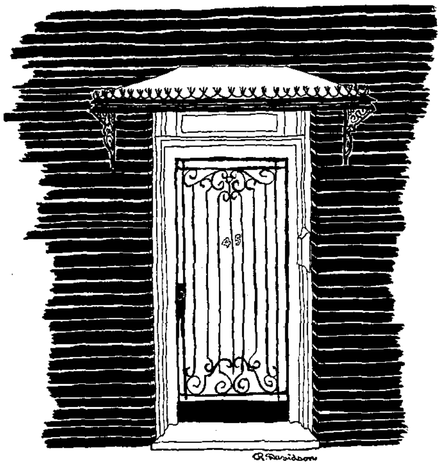
RETURN TO VIETNAM—II

I HAD last seen Trinh Cong Son in Saigon a few days before the end of the war, in a small garden filled with azaleas and frangipani next to the house where he was staying, not far from my hotel. He was with his brothers and sisters and a few friends when I arrived, about dusk that evening in April, 1975, and he was strumming his guitar and singing some of the sad anti-war songs that had made him famous and had been banned by the government. At the time, they could still be heard in some night clubs, and they were played on cassettes by thousands of young Vietnamese all over the country. He was thirty-six years old, a thin, intense man with deep-brown eyes and a small, wispy beard. His voice was soft and melodious, and it seemed to hover in the heavy pre-monsoonal atmosphere—full of foreboding, for North Vietnamese troops were drawing closer to the city almost hour by hour. We Americans still there had already been given our designated points of departure by helicopter, and had done what we could to arrange for Vietnamese friends and associates who wanted to leave to depart by transport planes. None of us, however, could have predicted the pandemonium and panic of the final day—April 29, 1975—when the last fourteen hundred Americans were airlifted out of the country and a hundred and fifteen thousand Vietnamese fled, some of them by helicopter but many more by boat. I had asked Trinh Cong Son if he would remain, and he had replied, "Yes, I will stay here—we are all Vietnamese. But if the Communists don't offer me inspiration, I won't write."

Now here he was again, nine and a half years later, walking toward me through the glare of late-afternoon sun in the rooftop dining room of the old Majestic Hotel, overlooking the river. He looked much the same, except that he had shaved his beard and he wore horn-rimmed glasses, which he pointed to as soon as he sat down, to acknowledge the passage of time. "I am still a bachelor," he began, and he went on to tell me he was mostly writing songs for documentary and feature films. He summarized the themes of several of the films. One was about a group of girls on a state farm near the Cambodian border who were captured and beheaded by the Khmer Rouge troops of the murderous Pol Pot. Another was about a woman doctor who had fought against the Americans and had been killed by bombs in the jungle when the war was almost over. A third film told the story of a group of teen-age boys and girls who had been corrupted by the insidious wartime life of Saigon but had been "reëducated" and were leading productive lives in the city.

"I have a wider audience now—workers and peasants as well as students—and I travel about and sing for them, too," he said. "Vietnam has not lost its taste for song and melody. In fact, there is a mass audience today, and there wasn't before." I asked him if he found less sadness now that the war was over. "There is no sadness the way there was," he said. "If there is any, it is a private sadness of pathological people—people who hug it in their hearts and don't accept the fact that society has changed. They haven't changed, and they blame society. They don't share the common cause. They don't mix. Frankly, there are fans of mine who blame me now for changing. They wanted to keep me a prisoner of their own feelings of sadness, to retain my old image, but I wanted to free myself for new sentiments and aspirations. My philosophy is that if a man doesn't change day by day he's a dead man."

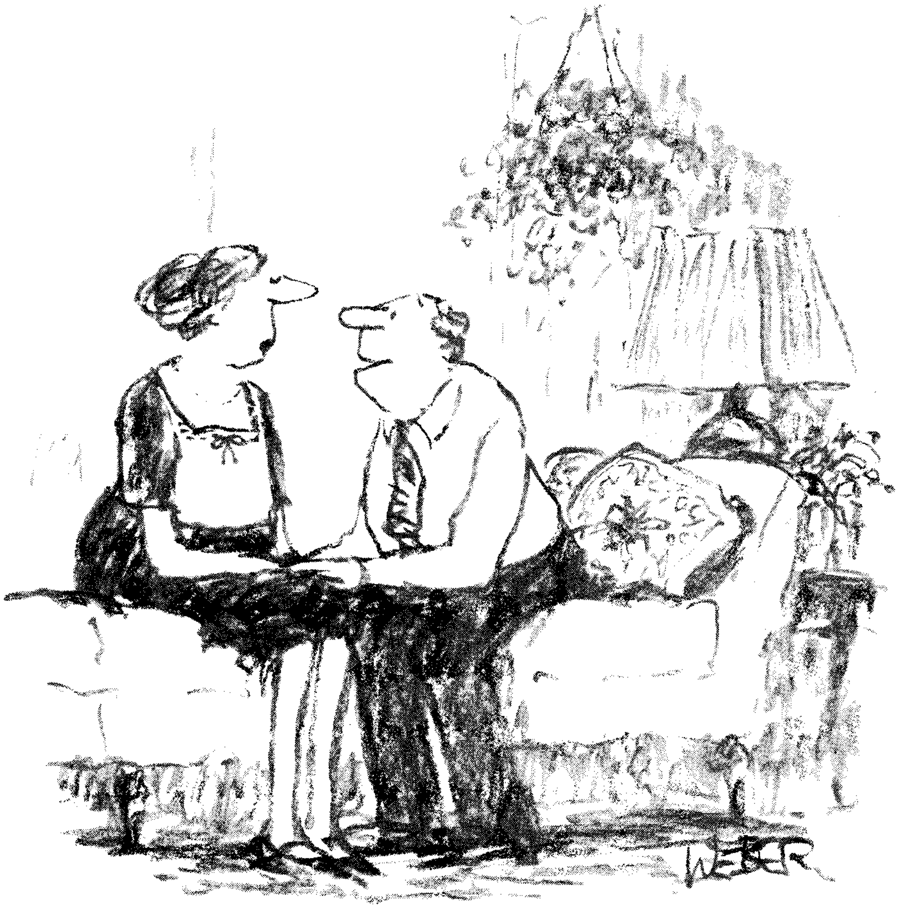
I asked him if he would sing me one of his new songs, and he said he would sing "Myth About Mother," and explained that Mother was Vietnam, who had protected her children during the war and sacrificed herself in every way for their benefit. He wrote it, he added, for the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon's new name). As he sang, he tapped out the rhythm with his fingers on the tablecloth. His voice was as vibrant and clear as ever, and the tune was evocative and haunting. It brought back to me that scene in the garden, but neither of us referred to it, and a few minutes later, after I had thanked him for taking time off on a busy day, he excused himself, saying that he had an appointment to finish some recordings.



Trinh Cong Son was one of the few old friends or acquaintances I was able to see during four days in Ho Chi Minh City, during a six-week return visit I made to Vietnam last summer and fall. Another was an American-trained economist who had gone through a short period of reëducation and was now working as an adviser for the present government, which had recently introduced a series of liberal measures designed to encourage farmers and workers to surpass their production quotas in return for the right to sell their surplus output on the free market. But I was unable to see most of the people I inquired about, either because there was not enough time—the government information office tends to hurry one through Ho Chi Minh City—or because they were "out of town." I tried to get in touch with several former Buddhist leaders, including Thich Tri Quang, the best-known priest of the sixties, who had led the opposition to President Ngo Dinh Diem that culminated in the coup of November, 1963, during which Diem was assassinated. I had met Tri Quang a number of times in the old days, though he had been elusive even then, and when I finally would catch up with him he would be cryptic and evasive. He had kept up his political activities—he was anti-Communist, anti-American, and anti-war—until 1975, moving back and forth between Saigon and Huê. After the war, he was reported to have been held under house arrest for a year and a half and then set free. Whether voluntarily or otherwise, he has since been "in seclusion" at his old pagoda, An Quang, in Ho Chi Minh City, and has apparently refused to see any visitors. Another Buddhist leader I had known was Bui Tuong Huan, a layman who had been active in Buddhist politics and close to Tri Quang. I learned that he was about to join his family in America, and then I heard that he was having second thoughts about leaving Vietnam. I was unable to locate him, and no effort was made to help me.

A MOST unusual case was that of Tran Van Giau, now in his early eighties. Giau was one of Ho Chi Minh's earliest and closest associates, having been trained as a Communist with Ho in Moscow in the early thirties. During the Second World War, he had returned to Cochin China—the southernmost part of French Indo-China, and the area that became South Vietnam—and had become the leader there of the Vietminh, the revolutionary front Ho had formed. This was at a time when the Communists in the south were undergoing one of their bloodiest and most violent periods of internal and anti-Trotskyist struggle, and Giau was in the middle of it. Subsequently, he developed an independence of mind that led to his political decline and eclipse, and he became a historian, occasionally meeting with visiting foreign scholars. Last year, however, he reemerged briefly, to make known his belief that socialism in the south should develop in its own way, reflecting the basic differences between the two parts of the country. He had chosen the wrong time to speak up, for the new measures providing individual incentives for farmers and workers all over the country and also some degree of controlled free enterprise had just been worked out. When I asked to see Giau, I was told he was in the southernmost part of the Mekong Delta, "writing a Party history." Later, I asked Prime Minister Pham Van Dong about him, and my question was politely brushed off. "Yes, I know him," Dong replied, and that was all.

Besides Tran Van Giau, who had obviously become something of a nonperson, it was also hard to see any of the leaders of the south's old Provisional Revolutionary Government or the National Liberation Front, such as Nguyen Huu Tho, the former head of the N.L.F., who is now chairman of the National Assembly—essentially a high ceremonial post. The men who run things in Hanoi, even though some of them were born in the south themselves and have retained strong revolutionary roots there, have still not come to trust these southern wartime figures, with a few exceptions—Nguyen Huu Tho being one, and Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, who for a time was the P.R.G.'s Foreign Minister and chief negotiator in Paris and is now Minister of Education, being another.



"Of course I love you. I love women, period."

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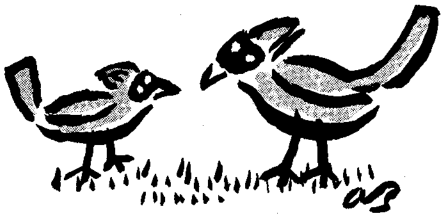
My biggest disappointment in Ho Chi Minh City, though not an altogether unexpected one, was being unable to see a former prominent Vietnamese journalist who had been one of my closest friends for a dozen years. He had solicited and accepted my advice to send his wife and children to the United States in 1975 but had decided to stay on himself, "at least for a while," he told me, in part because of his mother, who was old and ill. Some time later, though, he had arranged for his family to return to Vietnam, and we correspondents subsequently heard that he had secretly been a Communist intelligence agent all through the war and had been rewarded afterward with the rank of colonel and a new car—the one he'd had was about twenty years old, and we had always wondered what kept it running. He was now a ranking official of the export-trade office. One of my guides during my visit, who had also been a journalist before he joined the Vietcong in the jungle, corroborated this story, and added that my friend had a new name. I had no reason to doubt the account, but I felt, as I had all along, that it was not the whole story. I wondered, for example, why he had bothered having his family moved back and forth in the first place, with the help of the American publication he had worked for. Had he really been a Communist all along, or had he decided to become one only after April 30, 1975, for one reason or another? For "survival," perhaps? That had always been a favorite word of his, and he had often expressed his philosophy that all Vietnamese were "survivalists." Could he have been working as a double agent, or even a triple agent, and before throwing in his lot with the Communists had he wanted to make sure that he had covered all his tracks? There was some reason to believe that this was possible. Moreover, there were many Vietnamese I knew who were nationalists first and foremost—who had disapproved strongly of what the South Vietnamese government and the Americans were doing to the country, and felt that the alternatives, including a takeover by the Communists, who were also nationalists, could be no worse and might be better. Perhaps my friend simply belonged to this group; I recalled that he had expressed little doubt in the final two or three years that the Communists were winning the war. At the same time, he was one of the best-informed men in town, with countless news sources that no one else seemed to have. In our conversations over the years, often lasting for hours, I discovered that the facts and opinions he furnished about the Communists, the government, and the many different individuals and groups—including the Buddhists and the Catholics, who opposed both sides in the conflict—were more nearly on the mark than anything I could obtain from other sources, not excluding the American Embassy, which often knew surprisingly little about what was going on among the non-establishment Vietnamese. Some friends of my friend who had also stayed behind in 1975 but had since left Vietnam repeated the story that he was a Communist all along. But other such friends, who knew him at least as well, denied it, and added that he became increasingly critical of the regime, and told them he was sorry he had stayed. In any event, in response to my repeated inquiries I was told that he, too, was "out of town," somewhere deep in the Delta, but I came to believe that even if he really was around he would not want to see me. Despite the rebuff, I kept searching for him, hoping I might bump into him on the street or find him in one of the cafés or restaurants he used to frequent.

THIS feeling that my journalist friend and others I knew who, willingly or unwillingly, had stayed behind were somewhere about, were watching *me* even if I couldn't see *them*, kept bothering me during my stay in the city. It was part of the strangeness, the eeriness, of being back in a place I had known well for more than forty years—a place that looked the same in many ways and yet wasn't the same anymore. Or was it—or part of it, anyway? Trinh Cong Son, singing his song for me, talking about his new life, had obviously changed, but had he really changed very much? Had his old sadness about the war been altogether replaced by the euphoria he had expressed? Or did those old fans he had mentioned, who were his age, haunt and torment him more than he cared to admit?

The Saigon past indeed hangs heavy over Ho Chi Minh City, and I found it difficult, as many Vietnamese, including government officials, do, even to call the place by its new name. Gone was the mad bustle of the old days, the sense of a city constantly on the make, scrounging, cheating, stealing, pushing and jostling, pimping and whoring, full of discordant sounds and multiple smells, always bursting at the seams by day and seething at night. What was left, it seemed at first glance, was a dormant mollusk, its shell closed, waiting for the weather to change or the tide to come back in. There was something terribly tentative about the city, something untold and untellable, not because of any dark secret but because the plot was obscure, the future still unclear. How did Ho Chi Minh City fit into the new Vietnam? Where did it belong? These were the very questions that the Politburo and the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam had been debating for a decade, and they had only recently begun to deal with them in practical terms. Once the fact had been accepted, belatedly, that the south, and especially Ho Chi Minh City, had a different "mentality" from that in the north, as a high official had admitted to me, it was one thing to approve of the city's remaining a hub of commerce and light industry, a production center for consumer goods—in the words of Le Duan, the Party's Secretary-General, an "export city"—but another thing to change people's habits and attitudes and reshape the whole way of life of the place. Despite a number of outward manifestations of change—in how the Communists organized the city's administration, for example, and established control over the press and religious institutions—it seemed highly doubtful that the Communists would manage to achieve any such reshaping. Beneath a new, almost smug exterior, a purported antiseptic cover, there lurked, I felt, the same cynical sneers and self-deprecating smiles I had known in the past, and the same latent rebellion against the status quo.



Perhaps there could be no better demonstration of this than the trials that began in the city late last year of more than a hundred people arrested on charges of sabotage, espionage, and plots to kidnap foreign diplomats for terrorist effect. At the first such trial, of twenty-one people, held last December, it was alleged that the conspiracy was the work of an organization called the United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, which included some Vietnamese who had left the country after 1975 but had returned clandestinely over the past several years carrying large sums of counterfeit money. The Chinese were said to be supporting the scheme out of Thailand, with the approbation of the Americans. So far, three people have been sentenced to death and a number of other defendants to long jail terms. The government has given the case considerable publicity, even inviting a group of foreign correspondents from Bangkok to witness the opening trial. This was in sharp contrast to the handling of previous resistance activity, including plots ostensibly led by soldiers of the former regime and tribesmen in the central highlands or by Chinese espionage and sabotage agents alleged to be operating just south of the border with China, where sporadic violence has continued since the brief Sino-Vietnamese war, early in 1979. The new trial failed to cause much of a public sensation, and the foreign correspondents were only allowed to stay until the end of the four-day proceedings.

In fact, there are not many foreign visitors to Ho Chi Minh City other than those who have some official business there, such as representatives of international agencies. Vietnam's domestic airline, which flies small Russian Tupolev transports, runs a dozen or so flights a day in and out of Tan Son Nhut Airport—which during the war was one of the two or three busiest airports in the world. The exception is Thursdays, when Air France 747s take out contingents of the several thousand Vietnamese who are allowed to leave the country each month under the Orderly Departure Program arranged by agreement in 1979 between the Vietnamese government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. One thousand a month are permitted to leave for the United States. These are mostly middle-class people—including many Sino-Vietnamese—who either have relatives in

America or have received visas as a result of some association with the United States prior to 1975. (About twice that number of refugees—two thousand or so a month—are still fleeing Vietnam by boat.) In addition, more than a hundred Amerasian children, the offspring of American servicemen and Vietnamese women, leave the country each month, almost all of them with their mothers and other relatives. Of the ten thousand or so of these children, most are teen-agers; only a small percentage have identifiable fathers, so the vast majority are resettled by voluntary agencies once they reach the United States. I watched one of the departure scenes, which included both Amerasian young people and Vietnamese emigrants. Many of the latter, especially the older ones, were in tears at leaving their country forever. The emigrants were being seen off by hundreds of friends, who crowded the departure lounge. Those leaving had arrived at the airport early in the morning, hours before takeoff, to line up for an elaborate customs and immigration procedure, during which agents went through every piece of baggage, opening sealed crates and roped-up suitcases, searching through all pockets of clothing, leafing through the pages of books and magazines, and even ripping the soles off shoes and the heads off dolls, looking for money or jewels that may not be taken out. The Amerasian youths were more bewildered than emotional, though most of them seemed pleased to be leaving—not surprisingly, since such young people are generally ostracized in Vietnam. Downtown, in the blocks around my hotel, I was accosted by numbers of them during my stay, including quite a few who were homeless. They asked for money or wanted to know if I could help them get to the United States. "My name Mary, my daddy American," was a typical greeting. But none of them knew who or where their fathers were. I was taken aback for a moment by one tall, striking-looking young woman who was about thirty years old and whose skin seemed to be blacker than that of most black Amerasians. Then I realized that her father was probably Senegalese—that she was born toward the close of the French war, in 1954, during which many colonial soldiers from Africa had fought in Indo-China. She confirmed that she was half Senegalese, and said that she and her mother were trying to obtain visas for France; like the others, she didn't know where

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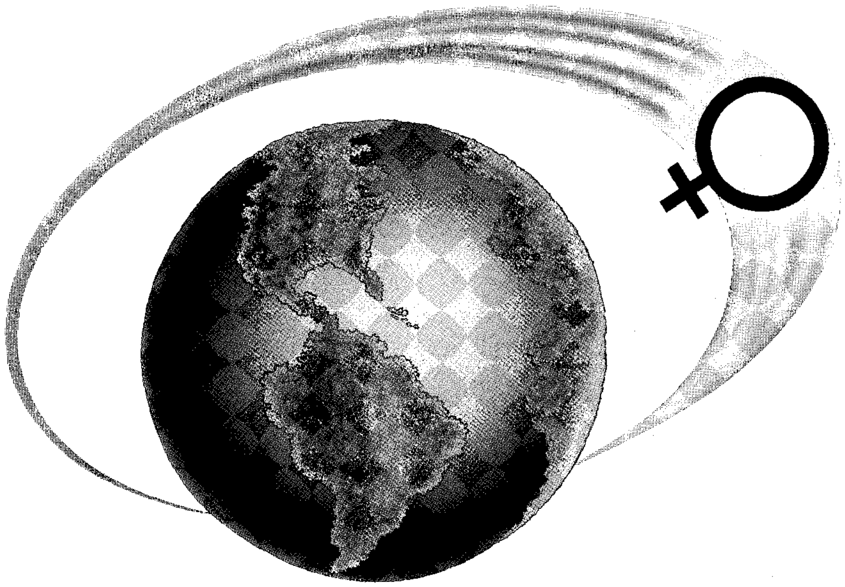
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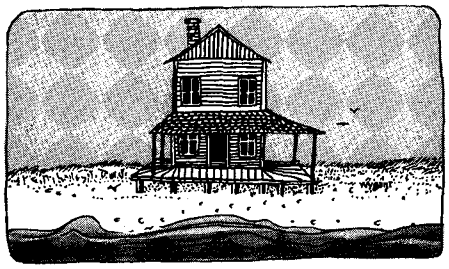
her father was, or even whether he was still alive.

OTHER glimpses of Ho Chi Minh City: The waterfront along the Saigon River was not as active as it used to be, but there were a dozen or more freighters alongside the docks or anchored in midstream flying Vietnamese flags, and a few flying Russian and Eastern European ones. Groups of unemployed youths (the national unemployment rate is as high as twenty per cent) lounged along the waterfront, and each morning scores of men and some women gathered in the narrow park areas along the river to exercise together. Venders were offering cigarettes individually or by the pack, lottery tickets, and ice cream on sticks. An old floating restaurant, the My Canh, was still open for business. At the central bank, where I changed some money at the official rate of a little over eleven dong to the dollar (the black-market rate then was two hundred to one, and it is now higher), it took a half hour and fifteen giggling girls to complete the transaction. I was the only customer. One girl, as she handed me back my passport, said, in English, with a laugh, "Too many girls here, yes?" In the center mall of Nguyen Hué, the broad avenue that runs up from the waterfront to the City Hall, flowers and a random array of clothes, watches, utensils, plastic toys, and trinkets were still sold at old kiosks, but no one seemed to be buying anything. Faded English-language signs saying "Arts and Handicrafts" remained up. Traffic was far less than it used to be, but a score of old Chevrolets, once black and now repainted red, were available for rent along the curb. "Sometimes they are used for weddings," I was told by one of my guides. Two of my favorite restaurants, which used to be run by Corsicans, had been turned into coffee shops. A large bookstore seemed to be more popular than it had been in the past. Ho Chi Minh City is a better place to buy books than Hanoi, and I bought several English translations of Vietnamese books I had wanted, while my interpreter, a diplomat named Nguyen Dinh Phuong, who had just returned to Vietnam after five years in Japan (he had been assigned to me as a result of the Foreign Ministry's wanting him to reacclimate himself to the country, and I considered myself fortunate), was overjoyed to find the second volume of a Vietnamese history he had been searching for.

Phuong had two sisters living in the city whom he had not seen in twelve years, and he spent as much time as he could visiting them, but one evening he agreed to accompany me to Cholon, the Chinese section, to have dinner. It was as crowded as ever, much more so than Ho Chi Minh City proper, and the streets were dangerously packed with bicycles and three-wheeled cyclos—laden with goods more than with passengers—but, despite the bustle, it seemed run-down, gray, and dusty. Apparently, it was true that, as I had heard, most of the wealthy and middle-class Chinese had left, either under the departure program or as "boat people," and the lower middle class had taken over. We ate at a restaurant I remembered, which had been famous for its crabs and shrimps, but the food wasn't nearly as good as it used to be. The place was just as noisy, though, and the owner, bare from the waist up, was just as fat, and still operated the fastest abacus in the East.

We had a much better dinner one night not far from the hotel, at a French restaurant called La Bibliothèque. It was run by a lively Vietnamese woman, Mme. Nguyen Phuoc Dai, who had been a lawyer and a former vice-chairman of the old National Assembly. Mme. Dai had a dozen cats, of every conceivable size and color, and they seemed to be in possession of the restaurant's two and a half rooms, one of which was lined to the ceiling with dusty legal tomes. She told us that there were no longer any lawyers in private practice in Vietnam, but that she conducted "adjudications for the city's People's Committees," helping settle personal disputes. That may have been one of the reasons she was allowed to continue running her restaurant. She served us a delicious dinner of onion soup and fresh crabs, which she cooked herself, on a small oily stove, surrounded by her cats. Our only companions were Bob Minnich, an American who worked for the Orderly Departure Program, and Tim Page, a British photographer I had known in years past, who was back in Vietnam on his second trip since the war, and who knew Mme. Dai well. He had just returned, exhausted, from several days in the Delta, and all of us reminisced at length with Mme. Dai, who wouldn't let us pay for our meals. Page kept referring to the city as "Hoville," which struck me as a much more suitable name than Ho Chi Minh City.



After dinner, we walked over to the former Rex Hotel nearby, to stop in at a dance held once a week by the city tourist association. The dance floor, on the roof, was dimly lit, with rotating discs of red, blue, green, and yellow light casting eerie shadows over the scene. A surprising number of attractive young hostesses were on hand, and there were a score or more foreigners, mostly East Germans, Hungarians, and Poles, as well as a few Russians. The orchestra played old dance tunes as the big, lumbering East Europeans and their diminutive Vietnamese partners filled the small floor. Two Vietnamese singers, a man and a woman, were much better than I would have expected—especially the man, who gave a good rendering of "Star Dust," though it was apparent that he had memorized the English words without understanding them. The evening, including eight orange drinks, cost me seven hundred dong, plus two hundred dong for a hostess who had apparently assigned herself to me. At ten-forty-five, the lights came on, and at eleven sharp the crowd dispersed.

The following morning, I dropped in at one of the ubiquitous handicraft shops on Dong Khoi (Uprising) Street, formerly Tu-Do (Freedom) Street. The place sold the same shabby collection as before—garish landscapes and portraits, lacquerwork, and stuffed animals and snakes. It was run by a Chinese, who told me, in a low voice, that business was bad and his taxes were rising. While I was there, one of the Russians who had been at the dance the previous night came in to pick up a painting he had ordered made from a photograph of his wife and himself. He was unhappy with his wife's likeness in the painting, and as an argument seemed to be brewing I decided to leave.

ONE of the people I had asked to see was a novelist now in his fifties named Nguyen Khai, and an appointment was made for me to meet him one morning in the offices of the Writers' Association, a quarter of whose national membership of more than four hundred is in the south. Khai's family, though originally from the north, has been living in the south for decades, and he is the only member to have fought alongside the Communists, joining them in the fifties, toward the end of the French war, in the U Minh forest, which was one of their strongest southern jungle bases. In 1955, he went to Hanoi, and he did not return to Ho Chi Minh City until 1979, when he brought his wife and son with him. “When we arrived, my son was older than I had been when I left,” he said. His reunion with his parents and sisters and brothers is the theme of one of his books, but his best-known novel is entitled “The Last Meeting in the Year.” Its setting is Ho Chi Minh City several years after the war, during the annual year-end Tet festivities. In the novel, a Mrs. Hoang has invited members of her extended family and some friends to dinner. A number of the guests belong to the old Saigon intelligentsia, and a lively discussion takes place covering a wide variety of things, including the social degradation caused by the war, diplomatic and military gossip about the old regime, maneuvers going on between the Chinese and the Americans, and the virtues and drawbacks of the new regime. Where there used to be a case of champagne opened for Tet, the family now has only one bottle, and everyone takes a sip. Mrs. Hoang is caustic and bitter about the Communist government, even though two of her sons are working for it, but the other guests mostly agree that it is best to take life as it comes and accept their role. An hour or so before midnight, Mrs. Hoang disappears into her room, and when she doesn't return for some time there is concern that she may have decided to take her life. But at midnight she reappears, and serves dinner, though she announces, with regret, that she has been unable to obtain her favorite dessert. Thus she expresses her decision to go on living and make the best of things.

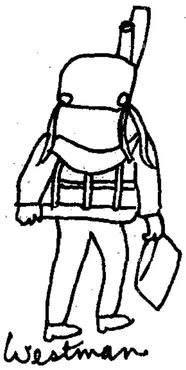
A number of postwar novels and short stories deal with similar themes of adjustment or readjustment, and, according to several critics and writers I spoke with, many of these new works, by authors now in their thirties, make up for a lack of style and imagination by being as matter-of-fact and realistic as possible in confronting everyday hardships and problems. In Khai's words, “My generation was more romantic; the new one, you might say, is more existentialist.” The evils of bureaucracy and poor management are dealt with openly, frankly, and often dramatically. One best-seller, “Facing the Sea,” by a young southerner named Nguyen Manh Tuan, is about the quarrels that take place in a fishing enterprise, first between the pre-Communist management and the workers and then between the Communist management and the workers. Problems of corruption, pilferage, and laziness are described in vivid dialogue and in angry but sometimes humorous scenes of confrontation. “In the years just after the war, there was a lot of writing about the differences between the north and the south,” Khai told me, “but now there is more awareness of common problems and difficulties, especially involving bureaucracy.” The interest in this subject, which has been increasingly reflected in recent short stories, seems no accident, for it has been repeatedly and forcibly stressed as a major problem by Party leaders. In an important speech at the Party's Fifth National Congress, in March, 1982, Le Duc Tho, generally considered to be the No. 2 man in the Politburo, declared, “It is necessary to put an end to a situation in which every unit head is voicing his complaints about the cumbersome nature of the organization but readily sets up more offices for his own service and either expands or maintains its table of organization. . . . It is necessary to eliminate the practice by certain localities of granting Party membership only to yes-men. District and precinct Party Committees and local-level Party Committees must find outspoken people who have, out of their concern for the common good, dared to denounce shortcomings and defend the truth.”

In Hanoi, before I went south, I had had a long talk with Nguyen Dinh Thi, the head of the Writers' Association, who is six years older than Khai. (It was at his suggestion that I looked Khai up.) Thi, a swarthy northerner with an engaging sense of humor and an urbane manner, fought with the Vietminh against the French and admits to representing “old-style romanticism,” saying, “You might call me a sad optimist.” He is one of Vietnam's best-known authors, having written novels, plays, poems, and essays. “My friends call me a duck, because I swim a little, fly a little, and walk a little,” he said. “I'm now writing my first novel in ten years. Writing about the war is not easy—not if you want to write about it seriously. It's easy to be shallow about it, but it was such a trial for everyone. We all struggled with the idea of survival and then with the founding of a new society. They go together. But to determine the link between the shape of the new society and the old, everlasting problems that have to be confronted is difficult—it's hard to write about true socialism, for example, in a way that doesn't sound unreal or distorted.”

I asked Thi whether he thought there was a significant generation gap in Vietnam and whether this was detectable among writers.

“There is no conflict, but there are differences between the generations,” he replied. “The older generation has a wider cultural canvas. Many of them know French and English, and they have read more. They have a broader education—they know about the past as well as the present. The younger generation is more narrow in its outlook, but it has the advantage of fighting and working for the future. Relatively few of the soldiers and workers today can be called intellectuals. The new writers are mostly grass-roots types. Their weak point is that they have no perspective, no background, no basis of comparison. But they benefit from considering the new regime as their own, so in some ways they feel freer to criticize it frankly, and to attack its weaknesses. They have no complexes or hangups, so they show a greater freedom of spirit.”

CORRESPONDENTS who visit Ho Chi Minh City are invariably taken on a hospital tour, and I was no exception. I was fortunate, or perhaps unfortunate, enough to go to Tu Du Hospital, where Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, one of Vietnam's foremost gynecologists, gave me an hour's tour and a talk on what she maintained were the effects of toxic sprays, including Agent Orange, on women who become pregnant. Dr. Phuong, an energetic and impassioned woman who has devoted much of the past ten years to this subject, methodically puts her foreign visitors through a wringer. Both Tim Page and I, who went there separately, left wet-eyed after we saw her “exhibits” and heard her well-planned presentation. The exhibits consisted mainly of deformed fetuses, including some without brains (examples of anencephaly) and some with enlarged heads (or hydrocephaly), and of samples of hydatidiform moles, which are abnormal tissue formations that appear in the placenta in place of normal fetal forms. Dr. Phuong, who told me that she has lectured at a number of international forums but has been unable to obtain a visa for the United States, also led me through the hospital rooms, including a ward for young girls, all of whom had hydatidiform moles. Some were sharing beds, because the hospital was overcrowded. The rate of choriocarcinoma cases, in which the mole becomes a malignant tumor, Dr. Phuong said, is still increasing in Vietnam, ten years after the war, and she showed me a series of statistics that she said demonstrated that the incidence of such cases and of other defects has been highest in southern provinces such as Ben Tre, where the Vietcong were most active, and which therefore were most heavily sprayed with toxic substances. For example, one set of figures showed a 7.4 per cent incidence of birth defects among pregnant women in a heavily sprayed village, as against less than one per cent in a village in another province which wasn't sprayed at all. The choriocarcinoma patients we saw, most of whom were in their twenties, were receiving chemotherapy treatment after hysterectomies. "Ninety per cent of them will recover," Dr. Phuong said, "but, of course, they will never be able to have children." She gave me a hard stare and added, "That means a lot to women in Vietnam." On the way out, she asked me to sign her visitors' register, which contained an impressive list of names and moving comments.



From Dr. Phuong's hospital I drove a mile or so to Ham Tu Street, in an old part of town that, during the French days and the early days of President Ngo Dinh Diem, was the headquarters of an armed gangster sect known as the Binh Xuyen, which conducted extortion and gambling rackets, and dominated the local Saigon government. It was run by an old scoundrel named Le Van Vien, who in 1955 fled to Paris with sufficient spoils to live very comfortably—I met him there in the early seventies, not long before he died. Diem eventually defeated and dispersed the Binh Xuyen, and thereby eliminated the earliest major threat to his regime. The area was afterward taken over for military training and then became residential and commercial.

I remembered that the river ran through it and that it had often been flooded. It was now primarily commercial, and I was visiting the Second September Engineering Coöperative, which had won a record number of national and local awards as a model of its kind. Owned by the workers rather than by the government, the coöperative has been recognized by Hanoi for having initiated a new system of ownership and management, which falls between state control and private control. "We operate according to production contracts," I was told by Vo Sau, a quiet man with a warm, creased face, who had lost part of an arm in the French war and was a political worker in the Vietcong during the American conflict. He is now one of three directors of the co-op. "That is, our engineers go out and look for our own customers," he told me. "We go down into the Delta and up into the high plateau and ask the people what they need—what kind of water pumps, for example. Then we draw up the blueprints, get the approval of the local People's Committee, and buy our raw materials from the city. It is really free enterprise, and I personally think this contract system will last a long time, especially since the Party has now approved it. Not to be boastful, but we originated it, several years ago, and it is now being copied by coöperatives all over the country."

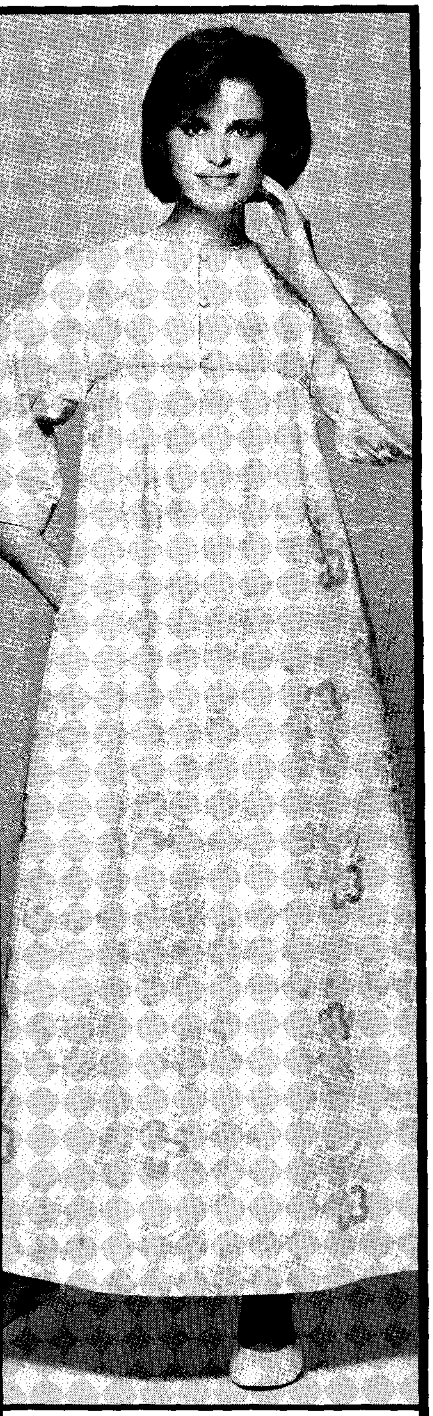
The youngest of six children of a well-off Mekong Delta family, Sau was the only one who fought on the Communist side. After the last war ended, he started the co-op with ten workers, including some who had served with the South Vietnamese and were unemployed and a few former small-factory owners who had access to some sort of equipment. The co-op now consists of eighty people, including a graduate engineer with a degree from Canada and one with a degree from Sri Lanka. Run by a council of workers, which elects the three directors from its members, it manufactures engineering tools of all sorts, agricultural implements, threshing machines, and small tugs and barges, including dredges designed specially for drawing the silt out of the shallow Delta canals. Most workers' salaries at the factory range from fifteen hundred to twenty-six hundred dong a month—seven and a half to thirteen dollars at the black-market rate, and about a hundred and thirty-five to two hundred and thirty-five dollars at the official rate. Realistically, in terms of purchasing power, the dong should be at least a hundred to the dollar, but the average factory worker's monthly salary in Vietnam is only three or four hundred dong, and what each man makes depends on the amount and nature of his work. The two top engineers at Sau's factory earn five thousand dong a month, and he and the two other directors get thirty-six hundred. Of the factory's total income, which in 1984 was about twenty million dong, a third goes to the government for taxes, a third for repairs and expansion, and a third for wages. The co-op works closely with seventeen satellite production groups in the same ward of the city, including some that are government owned. "Our workers participate actively at all levels—in management, production, and the distribution of income," Sau said. "They make the decisions. They are their own masters." Before I left, Sau showed me the co-op's latest major project, a large flat-bottomed barge and a tugboat with a Russian engine, being built in the Saigon River, alongside the factory. The barge was to be used for carrying tractors and specially designed silt-dredging equipment. "There's no limit to the kinds of things we can make," Sau said. "All we need is ideas from people who know what they want."

Sau's Second September Engineering Coöperative is a particularly successful example of the kind of compromise between private initiative and state supervision of the means and mechanisms of production which the national government is currently trying to develop. A factory that establishes its own system of work rules and wages, arranges its own production contracts, buys raw materials through district or city committees, and devises its own methods of management, with the state effectively serving as a monitor or watchdog, can be described as quasi-capitalist. Government officials accept the definition but insist that the ultimate aim remains "the steady socialist transformation of the economy by gradual increase of the socialist sector and reform of the capitalist one."

This is how the objective was described to me by Le Quang Chanh, who has been vice-chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City since 1975. Chanh, a plump, bespectacled man with the quiet confidence of a veteran Party cadreman, pointed out that in the south today the economy has five different sorts of components: state-owned, collective, combined privately owned and state-owned, small-capitalist, and individual-entrepreneur. (In the north, there are only three—state-owned, collective, and private—though there are also some examples of combined state-and-private enterprises.) "At the moment," Chanh said, "as we concentrate on agricultural production and light industry, including more consumer goods, and at the same time develop our heavy industry in a rational way, depending on the availability of raw materials and machinery, we are adopting a gradualist approach to socialism. Small traders will slowly turn into producers for the government, while others will be agents for government-owned enterprises, or we will make them that. Small producers can be organized collectively." He went on to say that the government will diminish the number of entrepreneurs through taxation—something it is already doing with restaurants—or by registration, or by limiting bank accounts. "We want to move the best-skilled people into the state-owned sector, but we will not interfere with those whose production doesn't affect the spiritual life of the people—shopkeepers who are traditional traders in fine arts or handicrafts, for example. This sector will last a fairly long time. What we are doing is in conformity with the specific conditions in Vietnam. It can't be dogmatically defined, and it's not based on what other countries do."

Technocrats and economists I spoke with both in Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City all emphasized, as did political leaders like Chanh, that coöperatives working under production contracts would become the backbone of Vietnamese socialism. Joint ventures with foreign companies, such as some in Japan and Singapore, and in both Western and Eastern European nations, would greatly benefit Vietnam, in the opinion of reform-minded economists like Vo Van Kiet, a southerner by birth and the nation's top economic planner, who is the principal author of the reform plan. In fact, preliminary discussions have already been held with France and Singapore to start joint ventures in fields such as tourism, the production and distribution of frozen seafood, and the development of agro-industrial products. There has even been some bold, if premature, talk about setting up free-trade zones and writing new investment codes. The Vietnamese actually introduced such codes just after the war, when offshore oil deposits were found (but not explored) and ties with the West seemed likely. The invasion of Cambodia in December, 1978, and the break with China that followed put an end to all that and resulted in the almost complete cutoff of Western and Japanese assistance. The consequence has been forced ties with Comecon, the Eastern European trade bloc, and overdependence on Soviet military and economic aid, which totals at least a billion dollars a year, and perhaps as much as two billion; firm figures are hard to obtain, since the Vietnamese pay off part of their heavy debt to the Russians by giving them military facilities in Danang and at the former American naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. Thus, with Vietnam all but isolated economically from the West, exports that could bring in much needed dollars to buy raw materials and Western machinery for the modernization of industry have been consistently low and behind target. This, more than anything else, has contributed to the country's continuing poverty and stagnation.

The Vietnamese are now trying to break out of that isolation, but the principal handicap, of which they are now becoming reluctantly aware, is the six-year-old Cambodian war, which they claim they would like to settle through negotiations. Domestically, they made a false start on reforming the economy in 1979-80, when the production-contract system was first formulated; at that time, poor planning, mismanagement, and bureaucratic confusion from the top down led to corruption and profiteering, especially in the south and Ho Chi Minh City. Now they have embarked on a reform effort that is more determined and more carefully controlled. The big question is whether this can and will create a permanent integration of the economies of the north and the south—an integration that would in many ways represent a compromise with, or even a surrender to, the south by the north. There is also the question whether the leaders



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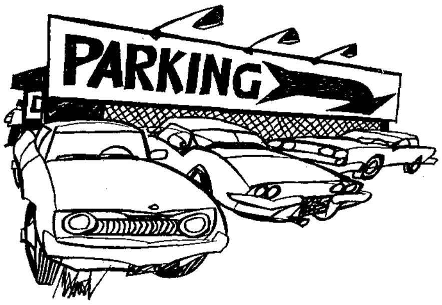
who take over from the old men who have run the nation for forty years can adhere to their Marxist-Leninist formulas and precepts and still create a functioning hybrid economic state, whether they call it Communism-Socialism or a mixed economy. Given Vietnam's backwardness and its heavy dependence on an agriculture dominated by a traditional and highly individualistic peasantry, the challenge is a tremendous one, and it is not made easier by a postwar attitude of inertia and a lack of trained cadremen. Experts agree that it will take at least five years to obtain the answers to those questions, provided that the "pragmatists," like Kiet, continue to have their way and don't lose out in a new political struggle with the minority of conservative-minded "ideologues" within the Party hierarchy.

All these factors have created more skepticism than optimism among Western diplomats and observers. Yet in recent months, as the Vietnamese and the Russians have shown a growing dislike for each other as a result of cultural and behavioral differences and tensions, the relationship has become touchy even on a day-to-day functional basis. The Russians, and the East Europeans as well, are making more demands that the Vietnamese live up to their Comecon trade agreements by shipping more fruits and vegetables to Eastern Europe, among other things. The Soviet Union has also noticeably increased its presence at Cam Ranh Bay; half a dozen Soviet submarines now routinely move into and out of the harbor on reconnaissance missions, and as many as thirty Soviet vessels are in evidence on a given day, many of them using the ship-repair facilities, which include a floating drydock. For the first time, a squadron of all-weather MIG-23s has been added to the two or three squadrons of bombers at the Cam Ranh airfield. There are more Russians disembarking from the ships and remaining on shore for several days than there used to be, and the over-all message is regarded as purposefully political as well as military, and as being directed particularly at the other Southeast Asian nations, which are again drawing closer to the United States. The Soviet message, in all likelihood, is also directed at Vietnam itself, perhaps to tell the Vietnamese that if they think they may be the first ever to edge the Russians out of a country where Moscow has established such a seemingly permanent military presence they better think twice. On the other hand, the Vietnamese, given their long history of stubborn independence, and especially their thousand-year struggle to oust the Chinese, could prove to be the exception to the rule.

THE new reformist economic path was laid out last summer at the Sixth Plenum of the Fifth Party Congress, held in Hanoi. Afterward, the government took the unusual step of publishing the full text of a major speech delivered early in July by Secretary-General Le Duan, which was followed by a communiqué from the Party's Central Committee, revealing that a long debate had taken place between the hard-liners who opposed the liberalization of the economy and those who supported incentive plans, a limited free market, greater local initiative, a reduced central bureaucracy, and a gradual rather than an abrupt transition to socialism. The communiqué ultimately came down on the side of the reformists. In his speech, after paying full homage to Marxism-Leninism, including the timeworn tenets of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and asserting that "priority must be given to developing heavy industry," Le Duan said, "In the current initial stage, agriculture and light industry have the greatest potential for attracting the social work force and making use of this and land as well as other natural resources of the country in order to turn out more products to meet the people's subsistence, material, and cultural requirements." He criticized the slow production of consumer goods in recent years and the use of manpower and equipment at "only half capacity." Such shortcomings, he said, "have directly stood in the way of agricultural production, created more difficulties for the state to control goods and the market, caused a slow development of exports and imports, and adversely affected the people's life." After stating that "we advocate the policy of maintaining free markets in a given area of the countryside and cities as places to trade and barter staple products between producers and consumers without the intermediary transactions of speculators," Le Duan emphasized that "the state must strictly manage the circulation of money, stabilize and strengthen the purchasing power of money, and collect part of the surplus money in circulation, especially the large amounts . . . in the hands of dishonest traders, speculators, hoarders, and smugglers." He said that "exercising mastery in the market is currently the most acute problem of our state," and, indicating that there must be firm limits to the free market, continued, "The state supply and procurement organizations . . . must organize the sending of supplies and consumer goods to the countryside." Increasing exports "must truly become a duty of the entire people and of every sector, every locality, every production establishment, and every laborer," Le Duan said. "Our economic structure must guarantee that each laborer can spend one hundred man-days [a year] for export activities. . . . We must use millions of people to plant and exploit hundreds of thousands of hectares of rubber, tea, coffee, and other short- and long-term crops." Only by so doing, he indicated, could Vietnam exchange goods "with nationalist, independent, and nonaligned countries while achieving a breakthrough in the interchange of merchandise with capitalist countries and removing the embargo imposed on us by the imperialists and expansionists." Significantly, he did not mention the Cambodian war.



The subsequent communiqué laid particular stress on creating "a new mechanism of management," which would "give full play to the collective mastery of the people, the innovative spirit, and all the capabilities of the grass roots in order to reorganize production." "Collective mastery of the people" is a favorite phrase of Communists, and is frequently used by Le Duan and the other Vietnamese leaders to denote state control, but though the Vietnamese are addicted to such doctrinaire clichés, they are trying to work out their own modifications and definitions of the standard terminology. The phrase has consequently come to have a somewhat new and ambiguous meaning, implying a more common aim or purpose when it is used by the pragmatists, or reformists, while the ideologues stick to the traditional meaning of control by the state. The communiqué went on to say that the Sixth Plenum had "deeply analyzed the serious and prolonged shortcomings and weaknesses in economic management," including "bureaucratism, conservatism, and stagnation," and also the lack of organization and discipline. In a particularly critical paragraph, it referred to "the many difficulties and imbalances" in the production of food, energy, and other materials, and condemned the poor management of fiscal and monetary matters. "The free market remains too large," the communiqué said. "Price fluctuation is still too great, and the life of the people, especially the workers and public servants and the armed forces, still meets with many difficulties. The disparity of the incomes of different sectors of the population in society remains too great." These problems, it said, could be solved only by improvements in the distribution and circulation of commodities, including the right of managers at the grass roots to hire, fire, promote, and train their workers in accordance with the principles of "democratic centralism." Here the communiqué paid heed to some harsh criticism of the quality of cadres by Le Duan, who had bluntly accused them of losing "fighting will and revolutionary ardor" and falling prey to "corruption, seeking private gain, and promoting personal interests"—failures that had often resulted in their becoming "degenerate and deviant" and in "exploitation, bribery, and bullying of the masses." The communiqué was milder, simply calling for "virtuous cadremen with good reputations and high managerial skills" to be appointed to Party and administrative posts—something that, given the general disillusionment of the young people, is likely to prove easier said than done.

THE problem of stirring up enthusiasm among the sluggish and often cynical youth while offering "social direction" to all elements of the population is recognized by the Vietnamese leaders as perhaps their greatest challenge nowadays, especially in the south. It is a task that is undertaken primarily by the Fatherland Front, a national body composed of more than a score of mass organizations, which was initially established in the north in the fifties but was reorganized after the war to include the south's National Liberation Front. The new Fatherland Front has an increasingly important function as an internal propaganda and proselytizing machine, reaching into all phases of public life. In Ho Chi Minh City, for example, it is active in all the seventeen wards and reaches down into the three hundred and forty-two communes and the thousands of block committees and households below. The deputy secretary-general of the Front who is in charge of the south is Mme. Nguyen Ngoc Dung, a pleasant diplomat with a motherly air who for a while had the rank of Ambassador in the Vietnamese delegation at the United Nations, and whom I first met in Havana in 1979, during a conference of the nonaligned nations. "When they gave me this new assignment, I asked myself at first if I was being demoted," Mme. Dung told me over dinner on the roof of the Majestic Hotel. "I wondered if I had done something wrong. I didn't understand the challenges and difficulties. But now I find that the Front is becoming more fully appreciated as an important instrument in the education of the people. The people have very different levels of understanding and consciousness. We can divide them into three groups: those who are enthusiastic and progressive; those who are indifferent and skeptical; and those who are opposed to the regime or have doubts about many of its programs. Our basic purpose is to get people to grasp the content of the socialist revolution, and to do it through the mass organizations of peasants, youth, workers, women, scientists and technicians, Catholics, writers and artists, and so on."

Mme. Dung, having cited the importance of teaching the masses ideology and getting them to understand and adapt to the new reform measures introduced last year, placed equal or greater stress on the impact that the Fatherland Front has on the daily living conditions of the people. "Our job is to teach them how to combine theory and practice—to explain the new resolutions in concrete, everyday terms," she said. She cited as an example getting all the city communes and wards to eliminate their own slums, to build new houses where they could, to put in new drainage pipes. "The government can supply the material, and the work and the money can come from the households themselves, except those that are too poor," she said. "We learned from experience, when the reforms failed several years ago, that we can't be too rigid or dogmatic. By getting people to work together in the right way we can help them over-

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come their hostilities. We’re still finding things out about economic efficiency—what works and what doesn’t—through trial and error. All this is not made easier by our many shortages and scarcities, but it’s all part of the transitional period to socialism.” Mme. Dung spoke enthusiastically of a plan devised by Mme. Ba Thi, the director of a company that supplies rice on behalf of the government to a million people in Ho Chi Minh City. (The remaining two and a half million get their rice on the free market.) When government procurement was lagging because the peasants refused to accept the low prices that the government offered, Mme. Ba Thi created a new group of purchasing agents, who, in effect, acted on a commission basis: the more rice they were able to obtain, at somewhat higher prices—which Mme. Ba Thi arranged to pay—the more they got paid. “People thought at first that she was destroying the socialist way of life,” Mme. Dung said. “Some even wanted to put her in prison. But now she is being awarded a medal, simply because she decided that solving the problem was the most important thing. This is an example of how we inevitably run into contradictions in carrying out our reforms under difficult circumstances unique to us. We don’t want to take unorthodox measures, but sometimes we are forced to do so.”

BEFORE leaving Ho Chi Minh City, I visited the district of Cu Chi, to the north, which is now a suburb of the city but used to be part of another province. It was said to be the most thoroughly destroyed area in Vietnam, as a result of constant bombing and shelling, much of which took place in the mid-sixties during three large search-and-destroy operations conducted by the United States. The Communists, though ten thousand of them were killed during these campaigns, remained entrenched in Cu Chi until the end of the war. They survived mainly by building a complex of tunnels that extended for over a hundred miles beneath the entire district; some of the tunnels, in fact, had been dug during the French war. Part of this web had two levels, reaching twenty feet deep and containing elaborately constructed conference halls, food and storage depots, and kitchens with vents that led to smoke outlets several hundred yards away. A portion ran underneath a riverbed. American, Australian, and New Zealand troops that regularly attacked the area suffered heavy casualties from booby traps and mines. I tried crawling through one of the tunnels, but I was too tall to maneuver it; specially trained Americans who managed to penetrate portions of the complex during the war were all small and supple, and were called “tunnel rats.” Much of the underground fighting that occurred during the height of the campaigns was hand to hand, and the main weapons used were knives, pistols, and grenades. One of the tunnels’ former defenders was acting as my guide, and he said, “The Americans brought dogs to detect the tunnels, and we used pepper to keep them away.”

Cao Van Nghiet, the Party Secretary of Cu Chi, told me, “There isn’t a square metre here that doesn’t show the effects of the war. There is a lack of reconciliation, partly because there are so many who were badly wounded and are blinded or maimed.” Nghiet, a lean, hard-looking man in his fifties with a pockmarked face, added that so much of the ground had been torn up by bombs and artillery shells or been rendered useless by chemical sprays that crop production was still poor, a decade later. “Living conditions remain bad,” he said. “Things are better than they were during the war, but as revolutionaries we are not satisfied. Many houses have not yet been rebuilt. We’re building new canals for irrigation, so we can have two rice crops a year instead of one, and can also raise tobacco, soya, sugarcane, and pharmaceutical plants. Cu Chi is supposed to be a breadbasket for Ho Chi Minh City, and we hope to process some of our crops as well, and eventually to develop light industry. Half the communes are now coöperatives, but that’s not enough—the target is at least seventy-five per cent of the land and eighty-five per cent of the households.”

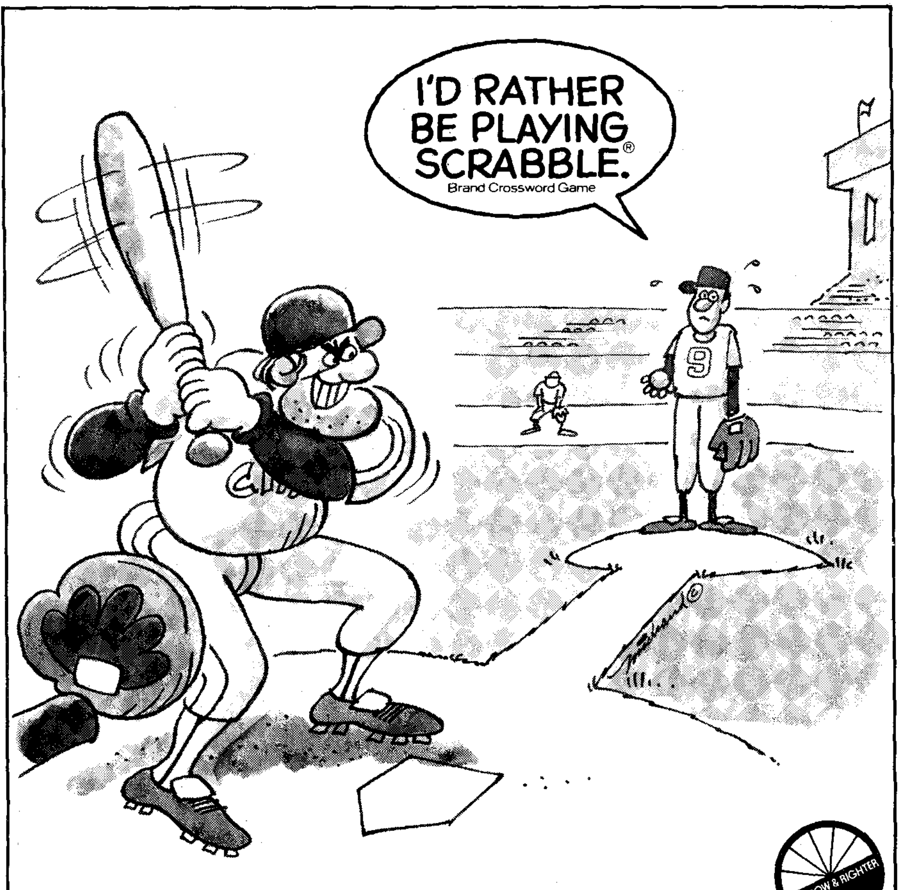
I remarked that this would be far in excess of the average among farmers in the Delta, only a third of whom have so far joined coöperatives, and Nghiet smiled his only smile of the day and replied, “We’ll do better here, because we remain revolutionary fighters and we know more than some of the others about what it is to struggle.”

Pride and martyrdom still run deep in Cu Chi. In June, 1972, a famous photograph was taken just across the boundary in Tay Ninh Province. It showed a nine-year-old girl running down the center of a highway immediately after a napalm attack. She was naked. Her hair and part of her neck and arms had been burned, and she was flailing her arms and crying, and she had no idea where she was running, except away. I remembered the girl not only from the picture but because while I was in Hanoi on this trip I had met her, one morning, in my hotel dining room. Her name is Kim Phuc, and she is now twenty-one years old. She was on her way home to Tay Ninh from a burn center in Germany, where she had been treated and had been given some skin grafts. I mentioned this meeting to Nghiet, and he nodded and said he recalled the girl, too. Then he said he wanted me to meet “another famous woman,” who lived nearby. On the way back to Ho Chi Minh City, we stopped off in her village. She is sixty-eight, and is known as Ma Bap. She lives in a thatched one-room hut that has double mud walls with hidden spaces in between, and a secret cellar, where she used to hide Vietcong soldiers. She showed me all her hideouts and told me, with a toothless grin, how her activities were stopped when two soldiers were caught by South Vietnamese government troops and made to confess where the hiding places were. Ma Bap was arrested and tortured but then let go. Her punishment did not seem to have diminished her satisfaction and pride. “There were dozens that I hid,” she said triumphantly. “I considered them all my sons.”

IF Saigon had seemed to me still Saigon, revisiting towns like Danang, Hué, Dong Ha, Quang Tri, and Con Thien jogged mixed memories of a different sort. These are places where some of the fiercest military as well as political battles of the war occurred, and where some important turning points were reached. The towns are also among those left most devastated and barren by the war; unexploded bombs have killed several thousand Vietnamese since 1975, and the rusted wreckage of American planes, tanks, and trucks and other detritus of countless battles and air raids are still everywhere visible. At the same time, there is a lot that is new: whole new cities and towns have sprung up, with red tile roofs on the houses, as in Quang Tri, much of which was totally levelled. And Hué, parts of which were destroyed during the Tet offensive, in 1968, is as beautiful and distinctively itself as ever. Over all, I was struck, as I had been before and during the war, by how attitudes and behavior varied between this central part of Vietnam, revolutionary in its own right and independent of both the north and the south, and the other areas. It was all still true, ten years later: though ostensibly part of one nation, the central region remains uniquely assertive.

Hué, with a population of three hundred and seventy thousand—twice what it was in 1975—has become the thriving capital of Binh Tri Thien Province, which is a consolidation of three former provinces. Officials here have high hopes that Binh Tri Thien, with nearly two million people in all and two million hectares of arable land, with one of the country's longest coastlines, and with ample ports, will become a principal export center in the next few years. It has a wealth of products under some degree of cultivation, including rubber, sugarcane, peanuts, tobacco, coffee, and pepper, and these, along with shrimp and other seafood, are its principal trade items. It also has a potential for industrial development, particularly in textiles, porcelain and earthenware, forest products, and some steel and machinery. "If we can exploit all that we have, we can become one of the richest provinces in Vietnam," Nguyen Van Luong, who is both chairman of the provincial People's Committee and deputy secretary of the Party Committee, told me, over a delicious local lunch atop the Huong Giang Hotel, on the banks of the Perfume River, where I had stayed several times in the past. Luong, a slight man in his early fifties, with graying hair and clear dark eyes that sparkle and join with a ready smile to express enthusiasm, was the underground leader of Quang Tri Province during the war. Now he is constantly on the go; that day, he was in the midst of rushing around his large province to confer with local officials about a brewing tropical storm, which fortunately veered to the north at the last moment, but he had taken time off to entertain me at lunch, partly because he was eager to obtain American aid for his development projects.

"Our province was one of those that suffered the worst during the war," he said. "Our rice crops were burned, and six hundred thousand people were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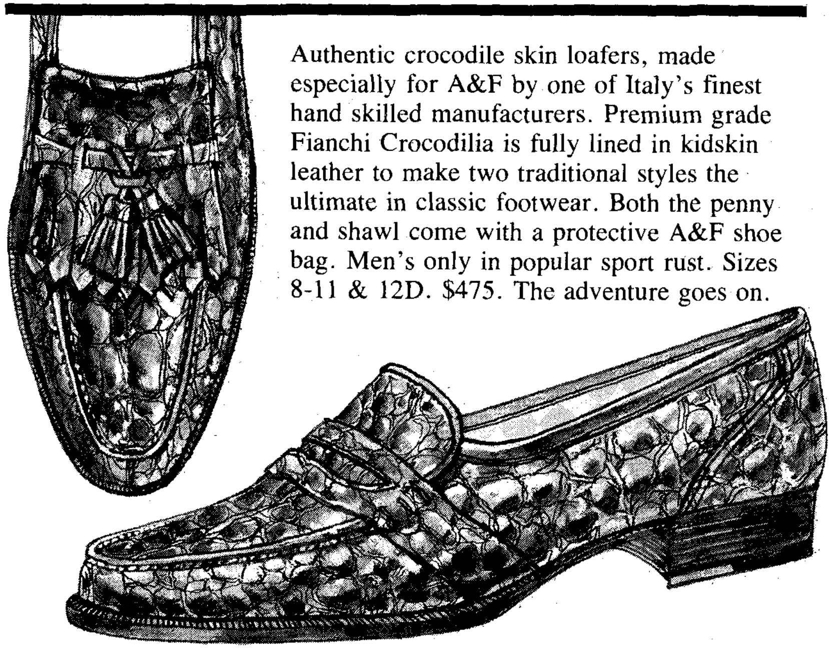

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herded into refugee camps that were like concentration camps. In 1975, they came back, many of them balancing poles with two baskets, a child in each. They had no houses and very little clothes or food. It was extremely difficult at first, and the unexploded bombs and mines everywhere made things worse. Today, we are no longer so poor, and both the peasants in the countryside and the workers in the city are well off compared with their situation then. We wish to forget the war. Please tell the American people that we have a high regard for those who understand and support us and we would welcome joint ventures on the basis of mutual interest.” Luong gazed at the sky above the river, which looked gray and menacing. Sampans scuttled like water bugs for the safety of the shore. “We must always worry about the weather,” he said. “In 1983, the storms and floods were the worst in fifty years, and we lost much of our grain production. This year, if the storms are not too bad we should approach half a million tons of paddy—that is, rice and subsidiary crops. The life of the farmers has become more stable. The grain bought by the government is only fifteen per cent of their crop—we sell that to the workers at low prices—and the farmers end up with a good surplus for the free market. We are not yet self-sufficient in rice, however, and the government gives us a hundred thousand tons or so a year, from the Mekong Delta. We believe that collectivization is necessary, but its form and the speed at which it takes place depend on current conditions. We do not force it, either on peasants or on merchants. We let the people choose the way to follow—for the present, that’s more important than whether or not a business is collective.”

During the war, aside from being the center of Buddhist religious and political action and, with a famous university, a hub of intellectual and radical student life, Hué was primarily a service city, furnishing food and other necessities for the South Vietnamese troops in the I Corps area. Today, it is a handicrafts center and is turning to the production of textiles. “By 1985,” Luong told me, “we will have fifty thousand spindles and make eighty million metres of cloth a year.” During a walk through the large Dong Ba market, across the river from the hotel, I had noticed many stalls selling cloth and clothes in addition to the usual wide variety of foods and consumer items. Now I remarked to Luong that it all seemed pretty much the same as before.

“The old ladies may appear to run their shops on the same basis,” Luong replied, “but, actually, many of them are now grouped into merchandise organizations. We encourage that, so they can help each other out, but it’s all voluntary.” Hué is also a tourist center, as it has always been, and though I had seen the emperors’ tombs on the city’s outskirts numerous times, my guides insisted on conducting me through them again, and then around the buildings of the imperial palace in the old Citadel; the Vietnamese in Hué remain inordinately proud and respectful of their imperial and cultural history. I finally persuaded my hosts to let me walk through to the other end of the Citadel, which had been turned into rubble during the fierce month-long Tet offensive, when the Communists captured the area and held it for three weeks before the South Vietnamese government, with the help of the Americans, could recover it. I wanted to see how much of it had been rebuilt and what the commercial life there was like.

The place was as busy as ever, and, like the market, seemed unchanged, with rows of small shops and artisans engaged in what appeared to be mostly private enterprises. I spoke with a seventy-three-year-old mason who worked and lived in a small hut, which, he said, he had rebuilt in 1968 after seeking refuge for three weeks in a pagoda to the south. “Many of my friends and neighbors were killed,” he told me. “I work by myself, mostly for people in the neighborhood. Some masons have joined the co-op, but I’m too old anyway, so no one bothers me. I manage to make enough to live on.” A few doors away, a slightly younger man, who repaired bicycles, was also working alone, but he said that his twenty-year-old son, a tailor, sometimes helped him out. On the busiest street, Mai Thuc Luan, customers flowed in and out of the shops on both sides; it was hard to tell, though, how many were doing any buying. There was an abundance of tailor shops, and it seemed doubtful that they could all survive. I stopped by one in which four employees shared the work and income with the young director, and he maintained that business was “pretty good.” A new suit, including the material, cost five hundred and fifty dong, he said—about fifty dollars at the official rate, and less than three dollars at the black-market rate—but a pair of jeans made from material smuggled in from Bangkok cost nearly three times as much. “They’re the fad nowadays,” the young man said. “We sell quite a few.” He added that his taxes came to between twenty and thirty per cent of the shop’s income. I later had a talk with Nguyen Minh Ky, the permanent chief of the provincial secretariat, during which he explained, “We allow tailors to remain independent if they want to, but even those who do are assigned a certain amount of work by the government. We supply them with materials. There are some forms of business, like welding, that have to be organized coöperatively, because what welders do complements what others do. Some of the fine arts are also being collectivized, if there are different skills using a variety of raw materials—wood, metals, cloth, lacquer, and so on—that have to be apportioned.” I asked Ky if he thought the country was developing a mixed economy, and, like most others I had put this question to, he avoided a direct answer but agreed that “we are slowly working out our own system,” adding, “Here in this province, we are midway between the north and the south. Our policies represent the north’s point of view, as set forth by the Central Committee in the recent Plenum, but we have our own interpretations of how these policies should be applied, and the government in Hanoi permits us to do things our own way.”

From Hué, Phuong, my interpreter, and I drove north, stopping first at Dong Ha, in Cam Lo District, which had been the scene of almost constant fighting and bombing. Dong Ha, at the junction of Route 1 and Route 9, which runs for about fifty miles across the narrowest part of Vietnam, from the Laotian border to the sea, is the hub of commercial activity involving Laos and Vietnam. The stalls and shops lining both roads for several hundred yards were full of goods, and the air was saturated with dust from the bicycle and foot traffic, and occasional cars and trucks. Youngsters wearing Western hats and shirts with slogans like “Law Man” dashed up to stare at us. The town was surrounded by uncultivated fields—a sign of still unexploded bombs. A cart came along pulled by an elderly man and a young woman, with a young boy perched on top guarding a new threshing machine, which the old man said he had just bought from his brother for a thousand dong. He was on his way home to his half hectare of rice land along the Ben Hai River, which used to divide North and South Vietnam, near the Seventeenth Parallel. The young woman was his daughter, and she had been a guerrilla in the region during the war; the boy was her nephew. "The bombs were like a steady rain," the old man said. "Many were killed, and those who survived lived underground or were evacuated. Now life is much better." He was very happy about his threshing machine, which, he said, would cut his work time in half.

A few miles farther north, near the village of Doc Mieu, the roadside was piled high for several hundred yards with scrap metal from blown-up tanks, armed personnel-carriers, and a few shot-down planes and helicopters. A sign in English said that this was the site of "the electronic-eyes wall of McNamara [the former Secretary of Defense]. It was destroyed by our forces March 30, 1972." The sign went on to explain that the "wall," which had consisted of radar stations that were supposed to send out signals from several elevations to detect infiltrating troops, was planned originally to extend all the way across to Laos, but was not completed "before the area was liberated." As we moved slowly along the road toward the river, we passed crowds of women heading home from the Dong Ha market with baskets on poles which were laden with vegetables and other goods. The fields here were mostly planted with new rice or had been turned into grazing land. On the south side of the river, a department store was just closing for the long midday break. We walked over a bridge, passing under a large sign that said "LONG LIVE THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM." Wrecks of amphibious vehicles still lay in the river. The bridge was built in 1973, but stumps of supports of an old one, bombed by the South Vietnamese in 1967, were still standing alongside. Phuong told me that the Provisional Revolutionary Government had had a forward headquarters at this spot, and that foreign ambassadors had come here to present their credentials to Mme. Binh, the P.R.G. Foreign Minister. Phuong said he had brought Georges Marchais, the head of the French Communist Party, down to the

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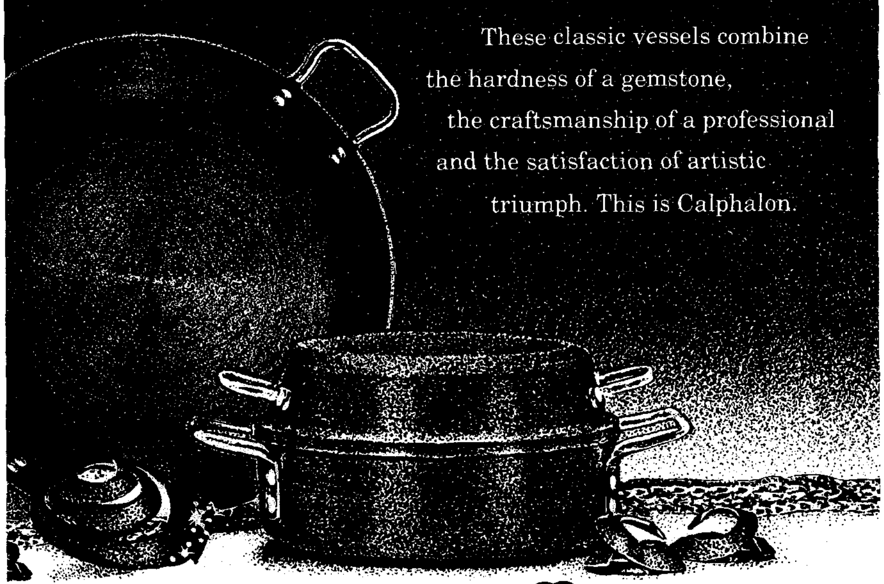

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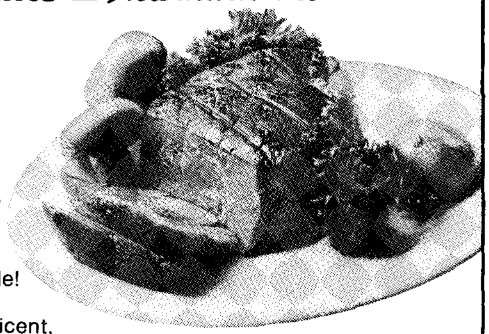

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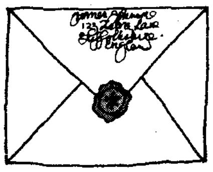
site from Hanoi, and that among other visitors had been Fidel Castro. The North Vietnamese used to operate a floating theatre in the river for propaganda purposes, Phuong added. Less than a mile north of the river, we drove through Ho Xa, a new town and the administrative capital of Ben Hai District, which was close to the town of Con Thien, another of the war's most heavily fought-over and most devasted spots. Ho Xa, with new red brick and red-tile-roofed shops and houses and various administrative headquarters, was the cleanest and neatest place I saw in Vietnam—obviously a showcase. About the only sign of old-style village life was a group of buffalo boys cooling their huge animals and themselves in a large fishpond.

On the way back to Hué, I asked to see Quang Tri, and we swung over there by a side road. The old city, on the banks of the Thach Ham River, was being partly rebuilt, but a new city was going up a mile or so to the south. During the war, Quang Tri, which changed hands several times, was the most thoroughly destroyed single city I saw. I remember visiting there in the summer of 1972, soon after the Americans and South Vietnamese had recaptured it after a costly battle that, according to a sign now posted along the river, "cost the enemy 28,000 troops killed; including well-known units of the Saigon puppets, paratroopers, marines, commandos and infantry destroyed or decimated; one hundred and twenty planes, two groups of U.S. puppet tanks, and great quantities of war matériel destroyed or decimated." The entire town had been reduced to rubble, and much of this remained piled in empty spaces. What I recalled most vividly was that not a single house had been left standing, and a lone wall about eighteen feet high bore, in a huge red scrawl, an obscenity about Jane Fonda. It all seemed a long time ago, and I suddenly realized that it was.



I had this feeling again the next morning when, back in Hué, I visited the Tu Dam pagoda, one of the country's principal Buddhist shrines, standing in a garden of gnarled trees and wildflowers not far from the center of the city. I had met here several times with Tri Quang and other priests during the height of the Buddhist struggle in the mid-sixties, when Hué rather than Saigon was the center of the anti-government rebellion. Thich Thien Sieu, who had been the ranking priest back then, was still in charge, I learned, but was unavailable. Instead, after a short wait, I was introduced to thirty-six-year-old Thich Chanh Nghiep, a high priest despite his youth, and the principal provincial secretary of the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Church, which the Communists established in 1981. It quickly became apparent that Chanh Nghiep belonged to a new breed of priests, who had come to terms with the regime early, and, in effect, had become a spokesman for it. "In the old puppet society, our position was one of opposition," he said. "At the outset, we didn't know what the attitude of the new government was, but by the time the Unified Church was created, four years ago, we understood each other better. Now we are stabilized. We have our own charter, and are free to practice our rituals and follow our beliefs. We are established in all districts and villages. People come to us now if they are real believers in Buddhism as a religion. We retain a political role, because the church is closely connected with the nation and both are passing through a historic stage. In the past, we supported the struggle for independence and freedom. Now we can contribute to rebuilding and restoration. There are five hundred and fifty priests and nuns in this province, and a hundred pagodas, and they all have close relations with the people. Problems arise in a few places, where some people don't yet understand the new regulations, such as the limits of political discussion. Our task is to explain these when necessary."

It was difficult to tell whether Chanh Nghiep, who had a schoolmasterish and somewhat smug air about him, was typical of the new priests, but it was significant, I thought, that he, like the government officials I had asked, refused to say much about Tri Quang or other members of the earlier Buddhist leadership who had played such an important part in the sixties and seventies. "Tri Quang is involved in the translation of prayers and no longer has a public role," Chanh Nghiep said. "He is a sedentary man nowadays, and doesn't go out much. In the old days, he went out whenever there were problems."

From different sources, I subsequently received news of two of the other old-time priests: Thich Thien Minh, who had been more of an active operator than Tri Quang and had played his own ambitious political game, had died in prison in Phan Thiet, on the coast, after the war; and Thich Minh Chau, who had belonged to a Saigon pagoda whose priests more or less opposed the South Vietnamese government, is now secretary-general of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Church. Most of the other former Buddhist leaders had fled the country, and a number of those who had remained behind had since gone underground and had been arrested for dissident activity. Of a total of fifteen thousand priests and nuns in 1975, about two-thirds had left the Buddhist movement voluntarily, or been persuaded to leave, and many of these, according to what I was able to piece together from informants in Vietnam and refugees in the United States, are now working in opposition to the government in some way—especially in the south, but to some extent in central Vietnam, too. Of some five thousand church people who are still active Buddhists, the majority, like Chanh Nghiep, have made their compromises. In discussing religious matters with a number of Western diplomats, I found far more interest in the Catholics, whose position is more complicated and anomalous nowadays. "The Buddhists will survive more readily, because they're a more homogeneous group," one of these men said.

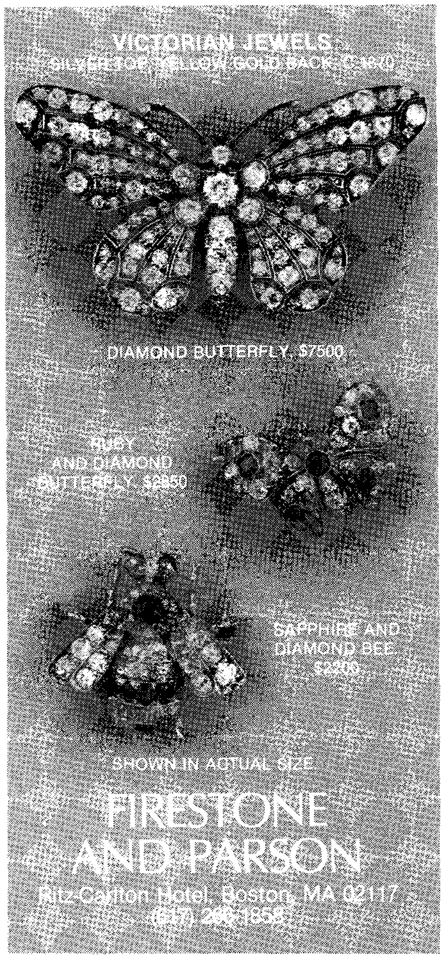
The Catholics have had a longer official history in Vietnam, going back three hundred years; they came to the country as missionaries, even before the French colonists. Politically as well as religiously, they were always active, either behind the scenes, under the French, or openly under Diem, who was a Catholic himself. After 1954, when the country was partitioned following the French defeat, nearly a million Vietnamese fled the north, and the majority of these were Catholics, many of whom assumed leadership roles in professional fields in the south and held top political jobs under Diem. Though they were less dominant after the overthrow of Diem, in 1963, their influence remained considerable until the defeat, in 1975, of the government of Nguyen Van Thieu, who was a Catholic convert. The Communists have since cleverly followed a double course. They have permitted the three and a half million Catholics in the country leeway in carrying out formal liturgical ceremonies and rites (confession, however, is discouraged) but have circumscribed social action, particularly on the part of the Jesuits. Most important, they have limited the replacement of parish priests, now numbering about eighteen hundred, to vacancies that arise upon priests' deaths—an arrangement that does not take into account the country's high birth rate, of nearly two and a half per cent. The number of bishops, about forty, has remained the same, but the bishops' activities are carefully watched, and they meet at an official conference only once every two years. Two are under house arrest. The sole Cardinal, Trinh Van Can, who is in poor health, plays a very cautious role and is a virtual prisoner, or a recluse, in his house in Hanoi. He seldom appears in church, and has been allowed to visit the Vatican only once. He has one servant and hardly ever receives any visitors, Vietnamese or foreign. A priest who is with him much of the time is generally regarded by Westerners as a government spy; letters and messages Can receives from other priests are undoubtedly scrutinized before he reads them. His policy is one of what was described to me as "divine survival," and to the degree that Catholics are free to attend services, which are always well attended and have been characterized by Western Catholics as "joyous occasions," this policy has paid off.

I asked to see two rebel Catholic bishops, one in Hanoi and the other in Hué, but my requests were quickly refused. Of the two, Nguyen Kim Dien, in Hué, has been the more outspoken and confrontational. He was subjected to prolonged questioning last year and suffered a heart attack, and, after hospitalization, has remained under strict house arrest. His opposition to the government continues: he objects strenuously to the strictures under which the Church operates—particularly the monitoring of sermons and the failure to allow more than two or three priests a year to be ordained. It is believed that more may be ordained secretly; and, surprisingly, the government is somewhat more lenient about nuns, accepting a few more each year and allowing them to work fairly freely in hospitals and orphanages, especially in the south.

The rebel bishop in Hanoi is Nguyen Van Thuan. He is Diem's first cousin and was the Bishop of Nhatrang, in the south, during the war. In 1975, the French papal representative, as one of his final acts before leaving the country, appointed Thuan coadjutor with Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh in Ho Chi Minh City. Soon thereafter, however, as a well-known and outspoken anti-Communist, Thuan was arrested and brought to Hanoi, and he has chosen to remain there despite attempts by his brother and sister to persuade him to emigrate to Australia, where they now live.

Archbishop Binh, who presides over the two-thirds of the Catholic population living in the south, has played a coöperative role since 1975. He reportedly said to a departing American at the time, "Tell them in Rome I won't betray the faith or the Church or the Pope. However, I will be pliable where it is possible, and collaborate with the government as long as it asks nothing of me that is contrary to my faith." He voluntarily underwent one week of "reëducation through labor." Binh did not issue a strong protest in June, 1983, when thirteen priests and laymen were brought to trial in Ho Chi Minh City for publishing what were alleged to be counter-revolutionary statements in a Catholic journal called *Religion Incarnate*. The thirteen had been arrested in 1980 and 1981 and held for trial over many months. One man received a life sentence, six received sentences of from three to fifteen years (including the senior Jesuit in the country, who received a twelve-year sentence), two were put on probation, and four men and women were set free. The Vatican took critical notice of the trial, but, like Binh, it has adopted a discreet policy toward Vietnam and so far has avoided what has happened in China—an open schism. In the fall of 1983, however, a few months after the trial, the government set up a Committee for the Solidarity of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics, to succeed a Liaison Committee that had been established in 1955. A number of so-called progressive priests have joined the new committee, but the bishops have ignored it, though they have carefully avoided any public condemnation of it.

Some things, it appears, don't change, no matter who runs a country. Just as Hué has retained its charm, Danang, a two-hour drive to the south along the coast and through the scenic Hai Van Pass, remains as shabby and unprepossessing as it always has been. Where Hué has doubled in size, Danang's population is down by half, to three hundred and fifty thousand;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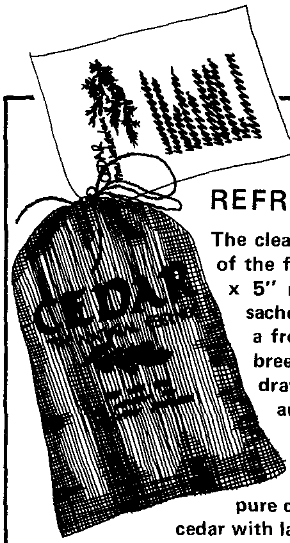

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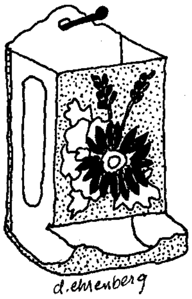
most of the swollen wartime population, which worked for the Americans in one capacity or another (next to Saigon, Danang had the largest concentration of Americans in Vietnam) has returned to the countryside. All through the war, Danang had the reputation of being anti-American, and I sensed a strong aura of this in the two days I spent there, during which, in contrast to the welcome and help extended to me in Hué, I received virtually no coöperation from the local officials. I was not even permitted to walk, escorted, through the former press camp, which is now a shrimp cannery; the need for the secrecy there, if not the smell, eluded me. I did visit the Cham Museum, across the road, and was happy to see that it had been refurbished with its former stone relics of eleventh-century civilization, which had been stored in nearby mountain caves during the war. The adjacent waterfront, which I spent some time exploring in the afternoon and evening, was far quieter than Ho Chi Minh City's, and the run-down atmosphere was palpable in the empty shops and the looks of boredom on the faces of the shopkeepers and the people lounging about—especially the young men who, as everywhere else, sat idly gossiping in coffee shops. The city, I was told, has the highest rate of unemployment in Vietnam. I was up at dawn both days, partly because my room in the dismal hotel was infested by ants. Looking out my window, I watched the city come to life and particularly enjoyed the contest—apparently a daily one—between an old woman and a girl who didn't look more than twelve, to see who could set up her vender's stall first at a choice corner spot across the street. Both were selling the same narrow selection of cigarettes and lottery tickets. Each won once, and the loser established herself on a chair ten yards away. During the time I watched, neither sold anything.



BACK in Hanoi, I realized that I had seen very few Chinese during my long trip around the country. Except in Ho Chi Minh City—specifically, in Cholon, where there are still perhaps half a million Hoa, as the Vietnamese call them—and in Hanoi and Haiphong, where there are less than half as many, the Chinese population is visibly diminished compared with what it was before the Sino-Vietnamese confrontation of 1978-79. The departure, by one means or another, of an estimated half a million Chinese occurred in several phases, or waves. In 1975, in the months before the end of the war and during the period that followed, tens of thousands fled South Vietnam, first with the help of the Americans and then by paying exit bribes to Communist officials and buying their way out in small boats. This exodus continued, somewhat more slowly, until the second half of 1978. Then, after the regime cracked down on capitalist traders and issued new currency to curb inflation and black-market money, the next wave left the south. Although this campaign was not directed solely at the Hoa, most of the affected merchants and artisans were Chinese, and subsequently their skills and services were sorely missed. Some months afterward, the government let many of the remaining Hoa in the south leave semilegally by boat for Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan upon payment of what amounted to a combined tax and bribe. The departure of Chinese from the north, including many artisans and industrial workers, began in the spring of 1978, and was initially encouraged by the Peking government, which accused Hanoi of persecuting the Hoa minority. There is some evidence that the Vietnamese, preparing to invade Cambodia, did force the Hoa out, in the hope of avoiding any pretext for a Peking counterattack. Other evidence, however, indicates that the Vietnamese tried to persuade the Hoa to stay. By the time Peking cancelled its aid program and closed its border with Vietnam, in July of that year, about two-thirds of some quarter-million Hoa who fled to China from the north had already left. The rest went across the border after the seventeen-day war in February and March, 1979, when Hanoi informed them that their only alternative was to go to resettlement areas in the far reaches of the country.

The costly conflict with China remains the overriding concern of the Vietnamese; more than anything else, with the possible exception of establishing relations with the United States and obtaining Western economic aid, they would like to settle the rift with their big northern neighbor. In the early days of their separate revolutions—from 1924, when Ho Chi Minh first arrived in Canton from Moscow and many of his original cadremen received training from the Chinese, until the end of the French war—the relationship between the two countries, despite a historic thousand-year-old enmity, was extremely close. It remained close, though less so, during the American war, when the Chinese furnished rice and some military hardware to Vietnam and generally, though not consistently, facilitated the transport of vast amounts of Soviet war matériel by rail across China to the Vietnamese border. After the break between Peking and Moscow, in 1960, the Vietnamese proved highly adroit at balancing the two Communist powers off against each other, until the end of the war, when the aims of Moscow and Peking in Indo-China and the rest of Southeast Asia, as well as Africa and elsewhere, diverged. Beginning as far back as the Geneva Conference of 1954, however, and continuing throughout the long second Vietnam War, the Chinese frequently tried to hold the Vietnamese back from intensifying their attacks on the south, because a united Vietnam under the banner of Hanoi didn't suit Peking's long-term geopolitical or revolutionary purposes. So although the alliance between the two was frequently described by both countries as being "as close as lips and teeth," there was sporadic friction in the sixties and seventies. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong told me in Hanoi that when he visited Mao Zedong in Peking in 1972 Mao had warned him, "We Chinese don't have a broom long enough to wipe away Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, and you cannot wipe away Thieu, either," and that he had replied, "We think we do have a broom long enough."

Dong was proved right, but Mao's admonition was an omen. The long, convoluted history of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russian involvement in Cambodia and of America's ill-conceived role there deserves separate treatment, but the background and ultimate resolution of the Cambodian war must be mentioned in the context of Vietnam's current problems and goals. Perhaps even more than the Chinese and the Russians—and that is saying a lot—the Vietnamese are obsessed with the idea of their own security, and the protection of their borders. For that reason, among others, they still have every intention of dominating all the former Indo-China

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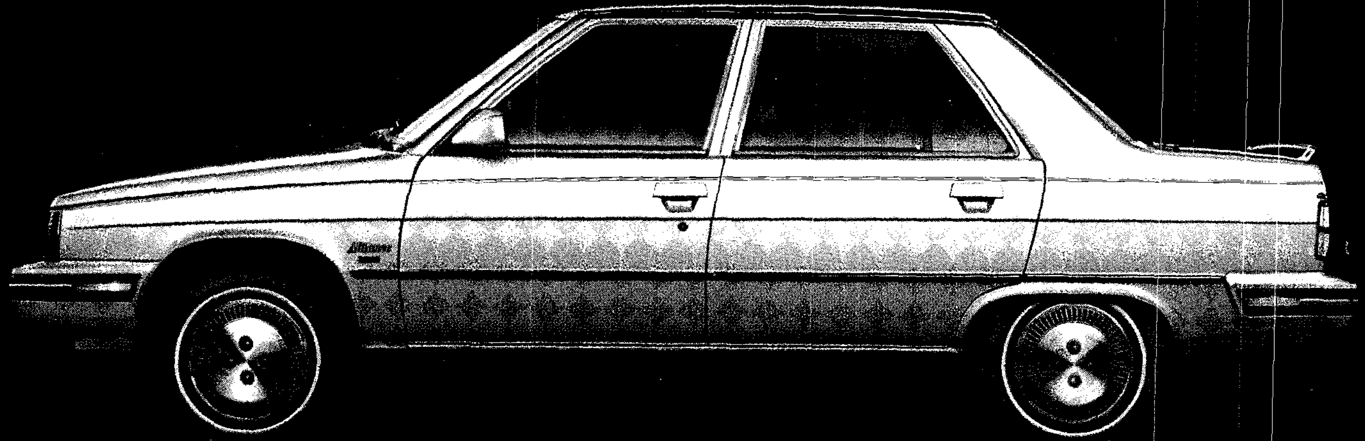

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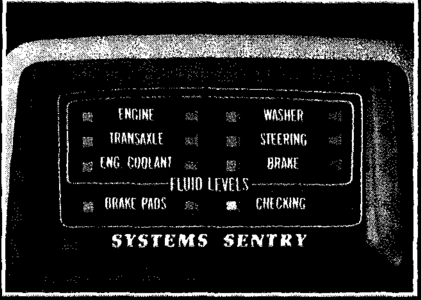

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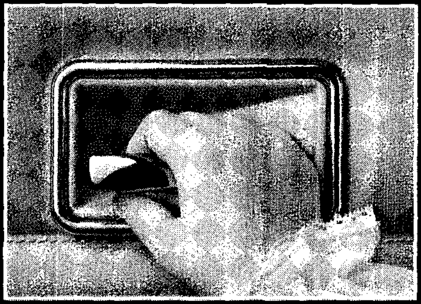

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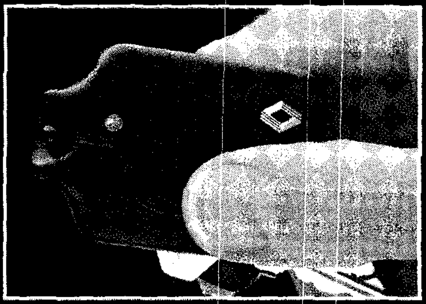

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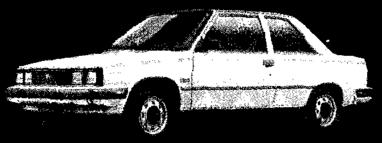

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THE ONE TO WATCH

area, and to achieve this they are willing to go on fighting in Cambodia, even though it means sacrificing the good will and the economic support of the Western world and Japan, until some sort of compromise can be worked out. Such a compromise may be more attainable today than it has been at any time previously in the six-year-old war, although complicated negotiations will be required, involving many parties: at least four separate Cambodian factions and several Southeast Asian nations as well as, in all possibility, the major powers. In the final reckoning, China holds the key to the situation, as it has from the start. By supporting and encouraging the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot, which proved itself more Maoist than Mao, and whose campaign of indiscriminate and wholesale killing between 1975 and 1978 was proportionately more brutal than what occurred during the Cultural Revolution in China, the Chinese were probably as responsible as the Vietnamese for the outbreak of the Cambodian war. The December, 1978, Vietnamese invasion quickly led to the defeat of Pol Pot; the establishment by the Vietnamese of a puppet regime, headed by Heng Samrin, a former Pol Pot lieutenant; and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam in February, 1979, when some hundred thousand troops moved across the border. The Vietnamese suffered about twenty thousand casualties and the Chinese at least as many. The Chinese destroyed several towns and some of Vietnam's important factories, but the Vietnamese managed to throw them back without having to transfer the main body of their troops north from Cambodia, though such a transfer had been the principal Chinese objective. Subsequently, Vietnam did try to settle the Cambodian issue with China, but Peking rebuffed its efforts, because what suited its aims then—and has ever since—was to keep the Vietnamese bogged down and preoccupied in that ill-fated country. Peking has continued to give military support to the three-way coalition seeking to oust the Vietnamese from Cambodia—the aid going predominantly to Pol Pot's forces, and to a lesser extent to those of former Prime Minister Son Sann and former chief of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

DURING my stay in Vietnam, I had long talks with several members of the Politburo, including Le Duc Tho, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, and Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, and they led me to feel that a number of things were occurring that could conceivably lead to negotiations on Cambodia. Since my return to the United States, there have been further developments, including a visit to Hanoi last month by Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, of Indonesia, which is the country designated by the six members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to deal with the Vietnamese on the Cambodian question and other matters. If a compromise can be negotiated, it is now said, Prince Sihanouk might assume a prominent advisory position and Son Sann an executive one in a coalition government that would exclude Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge leaders. Nothing has been said about including some Khmer Rouge moderates, but presumably Peking would insist on that; even getting rid of Pol Pot himself would not be easy, although he is reported to be seriously ill. For its part, Vietnam would insist that any coalition government be dominated by its man, Heng Samrin, and that elections, if and when held, be in accordance with the present Cambodian constitution.

At any rate, despite these obstacles—and they remain serious—there are some signs that a compromise solution is more acceptable to the Vietnamese following their recent successful dry-season military campaign in Cambodia, between November and March. This culminated in their capture of a score of quasi-military resistance camps along the Thai-Cambodian border and the driving into Thailand of another quarter of a million refugees—whom the Thais are becoming increasingly weary of caring for, even with international help. On a number of occasions, border incidents between the Vietnamese and the Thais have threatened to expand into more serious fighting. As a result of the Vietnamese offensive, both the Khmer Rouge and Son Sann's troops suffered heavy losses, but the bulk of the coalition forces, still totalling about sixty thousand, have broken up into small guerrilla groups, many of which have moved back into the Cambodian interior. They will probably renew their resistance during the forthcoming wet season, as the cycle of fighting continues. The war has now entered a new phase, however—a phase of what the Vietnamese used to call, during the American conflict, "fight fight, talk talk." While Vietnam, for its part, is

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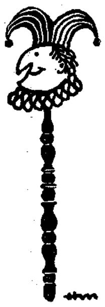
more willing to talk than it was before, there are no indications so far that the Chinese are ready to approve of any talks and, in effect, let the Vietnamese off the Cambodian hook. As the chief supplier of military aid to the anti-Vietnamese elements, Peking may want the war to go on for at least the rest of this year, in order to give the coalition forces a chance to regroup and strike back. However, it is significant, observers feel, that despite threats and the positioning of two hundred and fifty thousand troops on the Vietnamese border Peking has not chosen to attack Vietnam again, though it has shelled the border heavily and occupied some hills in Vietnamese territory. One reason for this restraint may be a desire on the part of the Chinese not to interrupt their renewed conversations with the Russians, which have produced some trade agreements and a reduction of tensions along the lengthy Sino-Soviet border. The Chinese are concerned, too, about the stepped-up Soviet military and economic support being given to the Heng Samrin regime, and about the growing Soviet buildup at Cam Ranh Bay, and these developments may make them more willing to consider a Cambodian settlement.



The other nations of Southeast Asia, with whom the hope for long-term regional peace also surely rests, would like to see the United States—which enjoys an increasing amount of trade with ASEAN members—reinject itself into the area politically at this time and help sort out the problems in Cambodia. The Vietnamese have expressed this hope, too—most clearly in a joint communiqué issued in February by the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The United States is reacting to these ploys cautiously and with obvious reluctance to play a dominant role again. In the past month or so, the Vietnamese have seemed more willing than they were to coöperate in searching for the remains of missing Americans lost or shot down during the war. Their hope is that, sooner rather than later, Washington will agree to establish a liaison office or some sort of regular representation in Hanoi, which could pave the way for ultimate diplomatic talks—that is, if the Vietnamese should also show a willingness to withdraw a sizable number of troops from Cambodia. In February, the Vietnamese reiterated their earlier promise to intensify the search for the bodies that were more or less pinpointed by the Americans as identifiable. There are some eleven hundred men missing in the southern half of the country. About seven hundred are still officially listed as missing in the north, along with almost six hundred in Laos and eighty-two in Cambodia. Of the total of nearly twenty-five hundred, roughly half are classified as Killed in Action—Not Recovered. The Americans have indicated a willingness to furnish the Vietnamese with technical facilities, and eventually, perhaps, even to lend them helicopters, to conduct the searches in the countryside, and it is hoped that the Vietnamese will allow some American technicians to accompany them on searches around Hanoi and Haiphong—something they have thus far been reluctant to do. Progress on the M.I.A. issue, and on the matter of the immigration to the United States of about ten thousand Vietnamese who have been in prison because of earlier associations with this country, might conceivably bring some sort of political accommodation closer, even without a definitive Cambodian settlement. Both the State Department and the Pentagon have been involved in these discussions, but how far the Reagan Administration wants to go at this point is uncertain. As for the Soviets, who continue to enjoy a position of exclusivity in Vietnam, and who are said to regard the prospect of Western aid to Vietnam as not unwelcome insofar as it will reduce the economic burden on them, they will not in any event readily give up their hold on Cam Ranh Bay. It is also too soon to know how Moscow feels about Southeast Asia over all, but these are matters that might be discussed during projected summit talks between President Reagan and General-Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev.

FOREIGN policy in Communist countries, it has been noted, is invariably a reflection of domestic policy, and this is clearly true in Vietnam today. The ascendancy of the pragmatists in propounding and introducing the liberal economic reforms, including incentives to encourage production and allow surplus agricultural and industrial goods to be freely sold on the open market, has subdued the hard-line ideologues in the area of foreign policy, too. The minorities in the Politburo and on the Party's Central Committee who see the reforms as opening the country to the dangers of capitalism are also hesitant to open Vietnam to Western influence at the expense of maintaining close ties to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The pragmatists, however, have seemingly won the day, and unless there is a complete reversal of policy when the current Old Guard is replaced by younger leaders—an event that cannot be very far off—it is unlikely that a swing back to conservatism and away from reform will readily occur.

The new approach is reflected in the conduct and the statements of Party Secretary-General Le Duan and of Le Duc Tho, who remains the man most likely to succeed Duan. In my unusually long and frank talk with Le Duc Tho—the first time he had spoken with an American since the Paris peace talks, he said—he dealt both directly and obliquely with these policy matters. About the Chinese he was tolerant and almost forgiving. "We are not surprised by the betrayal of Marxism-Leninism by the Chinese rulers," he said. "The path followed by the Communist Party is never smooth. Even in Vietnam, this has happened. We experienced periods of victory, setback, and then progress again. These things are normal. I am confident that the genuine Chinese Communists will not allow China to continue the present line forever. In the future, they will bring China back to the right course." Tho was careful in talking about the Soviet Union—both he and Le Duan have always been more sympathetic to Moscow than to Peking—to express no criticism, but he said, "We are different from the Soviet Union, which is an industrial country, while we have to find methods of management suitable to an agricultural nation. Severe criticism has been levelled against us by some of our enemies because of our supposed conservatism. During the war, the assistance given by the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc was mostly to fight the war and solve questions of the people's living. Our method of management then was bureaucratic, but now we are advancing to socialism by moving away from bureaucratic centralism and using many economic components suitable to a period of transition."

The cautious way the Vietnamese are handling these domestic and foreign-policy matters reflects both a continuing ambivalence and the fact that, like it or not, the country is still heavily dependent on the Soviet Union for military and economic assistance. Some seven thousand Russians, mostly technicians, are still in Vietnam, along with about fifteen hundred East Europeans. Pham Binh, the head of a think tank called the Institute for International Relations, attached to the Foreign Ministry, and with whom I also spoke at length, clearly espoused the old Party line, coupling harsh criticism of China with an almost idolatrous defense of the Soviet Union. “Our relationship of friendship and solidarity with the Soviet Union is our paramount concern,” he said. “There is no other country in the world that could do what the Soviet Union has done—give us a billion dollars’ worth of aid a year for twenty years, and build nearly two hundred factories for us. Good economic relations with other countries are no obstacle as far as the Russians are concerned, but we resent any effort to use other countries’ aid as a tool to separate us from the Soviet Union.” The Vietnamese have been making some efforts lately to broaden their foreign contacts, not only with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries but with India, which was already considered a friend. Last September, Le Duan made his first diplomatic visit to a non-Communist nation when he visited India, and recently Van Tien Dung, the Defense Minister, who is considered a hard-liner, visited both India and Indonesia.

Hanoi’s decision to make conciliatory approaches to Washington and Peking was the result of a Politburo meeting last December, a fortnight after the dry-season offensive began in Cambodia. Early in February, in a speech in Hanoi marking the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Le Duan followed up this decision by declaring that he was “firmly convinced” that friendship between China and Vietnam “will have to be restored.” A week or so later, in mid-February, Le Duc Tho visited France to attend a congress of the French Communist Party—something he had never done before—and in his speech there, beyond avoiding any attacks on China and declining to use the usual pejorative term “hegemonists” to describe the Chinese, he said, “The time has come for all those concerned to sit down together to seek a peaceful solution to the problems concerning the three Indo-Chinese countries.” There were reports later,

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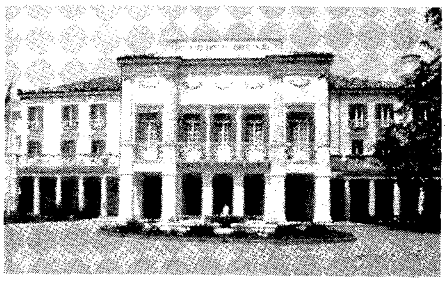

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though they were unconfirmed, that Tho had met secretly with the Chinese in Paris. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Thach, who has been given increasing leeway to make diplomatic moves on his own (although the Politburo still makes the final decisions), recently wrote a highly conciliatory letter to Wu Xueqian, the Chinese Foreign Minister, thanking China for all its help to Vietnam in the past and suggesting "secret talks in order to restore our old friendship." The Chinese did not respond officially; apparently, they doubted the letter's sincerity and decided to wait for a more positive sign of Vietnam's willingness to compromise on Cambodia. However, Hu Yaobang, the Chinese Communist Party General-Secretary, did say in a subsequent speech that China favored better relations with Vietnam and that a commitment "in principle" by the Vietnamese to get out of Cambodia would be favorably received. There is every indication, meanwhile, that the Vietnamese intend to continue their overtures to Washington and to adopt a more freewheeling approach to the non-Communist world in general.

THE road from Hanoi north to Langson and the Chinese border twists and winds and eventually climbs for a total of a hundred miles through some of the most starkly beautiful scenic parts of the country. History unravels along the way: the residue of violence that reflects the four decades of Vietnam's embattled revolutionary existence; the faded brick hilltop remnants of old French forts and bunkers built seventy-five or a hundred years ago; the bombed and broken bridges and still unrepaired factories destroyed in the war against the Americans; and then Langson itself, a sleepy, vulnerable town, which the Chinese battered badly in their brief and inconclusive attack in 1979. The road is drenched in the dust of swarms of carts and trucks and bouncing bicycles loaded with fruits and vegetables, the carcasses of skinny cattle and fat pigs, and chickens and ducks, dead or alive, tied together with ropes or staring and bobbing foolishly in wicker and wire cages. The new green rice rising high after the recent rains stands ready to be harvested, and farther along the way, on the higher slopes, there are fields of maize and soybeans and manioc. Women by the roadside peddle basketfuls of pineapples, coconuts, and, mostly, lush breadfruit, and we bargain for and finally buy five for a hundred and sixty dong, which is less than a dollar at the black-market rate. No one in Vietnam lives by the rules, whether farmer or city dweller, and, despite the constant talk about poverty and underdevelopment, the people, including the children and the elderly, look healthy. Food is obviously no longer a problem, but, as in all underdeveloped nations, and some developed ones, too, distribution is. We only had to look at the dilapidated trains—ancient French, Chinese, and Russian rolling stock—that chugged alongside us at twenty miles an hour, if they chugged at all. A Belgian woman I know who works for a consortium that markets locomotives has been trying for three years to sell a few to the Vietnamese. "They want them, they need them, but I keep being sent from office to office," she told me. "No one can make a decision. That's the story of Vietnam."

In Langson, at the headquarters of the Ha Tuyen Province People's Committee, Nguyen Phi Long, the secretary, who is a plump man in his mid-fifties, invites me to join him at a long table set with tea and cookies as I get the usual briefing. Long reveals that he is ethnically a Kinh—as are the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese—and he tells me that minority ethnic groups in the north include the Nung, the Tay, the San Chi, the Dao, the Muong, the Cao Lan, and the Hoa. "We consider them all Vietnamese," he said.

"Even the Hoa?" I ask.

"Yes, those that are still left," Long replies, with a smile. "The minorities have lived together for thousands of years. They are good fighters. They have fought against the Chinese for centuries. In almost every century, there was at least one famous battle." He starts listing them for me, and I listen, sipping the hot tea. The Vietnamese love to tell stories about the war—any war. Long's voice drones on. "In the thirteenth century, we defeated Kublai Khan," he is saying. Then, after a while: "This was one of Ho's earliest revolutionary headquarters. During the battle of Dien Bien Phu, it was a storage area." He passes over the American war, perhaps because there was little bombing this far north, but he recounts the details of the Chinese invasion six years ago. "They came through Friendship Pass, just up the road," he says. "There were six columns attacking, and one column struck for Langson. But they

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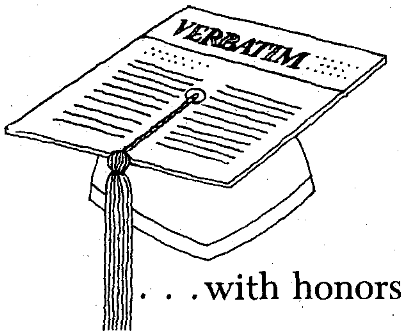

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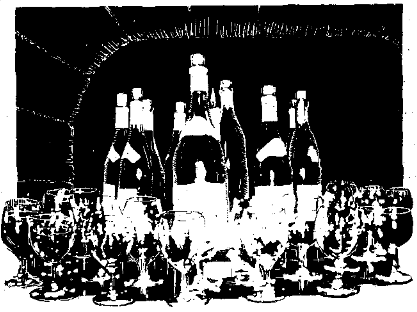

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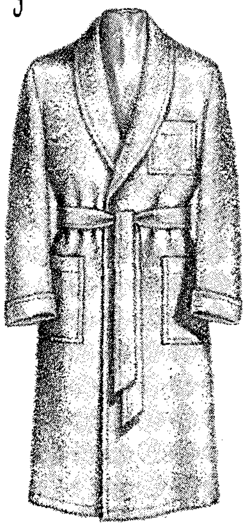
occupied the city for only two days, from March third until March fifth. By the eleventh, we had driven them out of the province. Still, they did a lot of damage." He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and reads a list to me: thirty schools, five district hospitals, fifty-seven bridges and water tunnels, twenty-seven industrial establishments. As for the present, Long says, "The Chinese have stationed three kinds of troops along the border—regular, local, and guerrilla—and they still shell us regularly, though they haven't for the past few weeks. They are building new roads now. The tension will continue. I consider these activities closely related to the Chinese Communist action in Cambodia and support of the Pol Pot forces there. They are trying to weaken our economy, and they will attack us again if the opportunity arises. We must carry out the twin tasks—production and defense."

It has started to rain, and by the time my interpreter and I reach the entrance to Friendship Pass, which is the historic invasion route from China, it is pouring hard. We walk the final few hundred yards near the border and then run for a small guard post, where a single twenty-one-year-old soldier is on duty. He, too, is a Kinh, he tells us, and his home is only a kilometre or so away. He is assigned here for two months. Though the shelling has diminished lately, the Chinese have increased their loudspeaker propaganda messages from twice a day to three or four times a day, and there are even sometimes one or two at night. "They keep talking about Le Duan and our being aggressors," he says, "but then they suggest we barter goods—they want to give us blankets and colorful cloth for our flashlights and medicinal products."

I can barely make out a Chinese radio station, at the top of the highest hill on the other side of the border. It does not look like much of a threat, and all remains very peaceful, if wet. Standing there in the mist with the soldier and my guide at the bottom of the long ridge of mountains, I feel like a small figure barely visible against the huge majesty of nature in a Sung-dynasty landscape. And I think, as I often did during the war, that Vietnam would be a breathtakingly beautiful country for the rest of the world to get to know, if only it could find the way to enduring peace. —ROBERT SHAPLEN

(This is the second part of a two-part article.)



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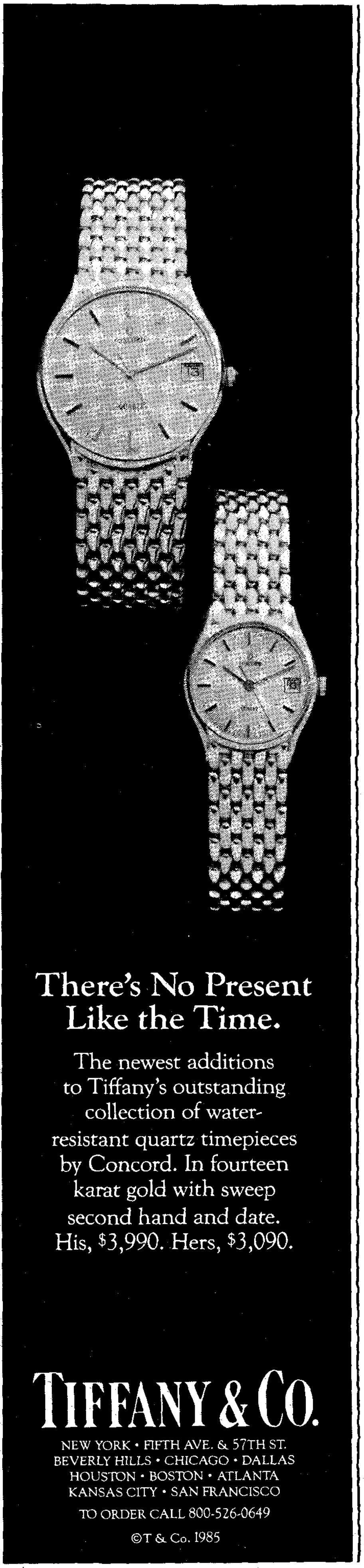

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LEAVING TOWN: A SHORT STORY

The trumpeter in the mariachi band
dreamt again of a landlocked swan.

Of the blue desert
under a moon filled with seawater.

The drummer overslept as usual
and the band left him behind.

They were staying in the hotel
with the broken fountain.

Last night the drummer posed for pictures
with the girls at the Triangle Club.

This was between the band's two shows
at the Café Barracuda, next door.

The trumpeter also missed the train
this morning, but for personal reasons.

He had glimpsed a woman he used to know
(her hair dyed black) getting off an elevator.

The two musicians ate lunch
downtown, at a chop-suey joint.

In the distance the mountains
shimmered behind the desert wind.

The drummer recounted his evening's adventures,
but the trumpeter wasn't listening.

He was thinking back on old times
with the woman—another city, another life . . .

A July afternoon of flatbed trucks
rushing by with slabs of ice.

And crazy sirens. And a dozen people
dead of heat exhaustion.

That night they had gone to the park
to watch the river through the elms.

They counted the sapphires
the moonlight was laying on the far bank.

The drummer, weary of talking, bought some cigars
and asked the waiter where he could score opium.

Then he wired ahead to the band in the next town
and reserved two seats on the train.

The trumpeter called the hotel
and left a message for the woman.

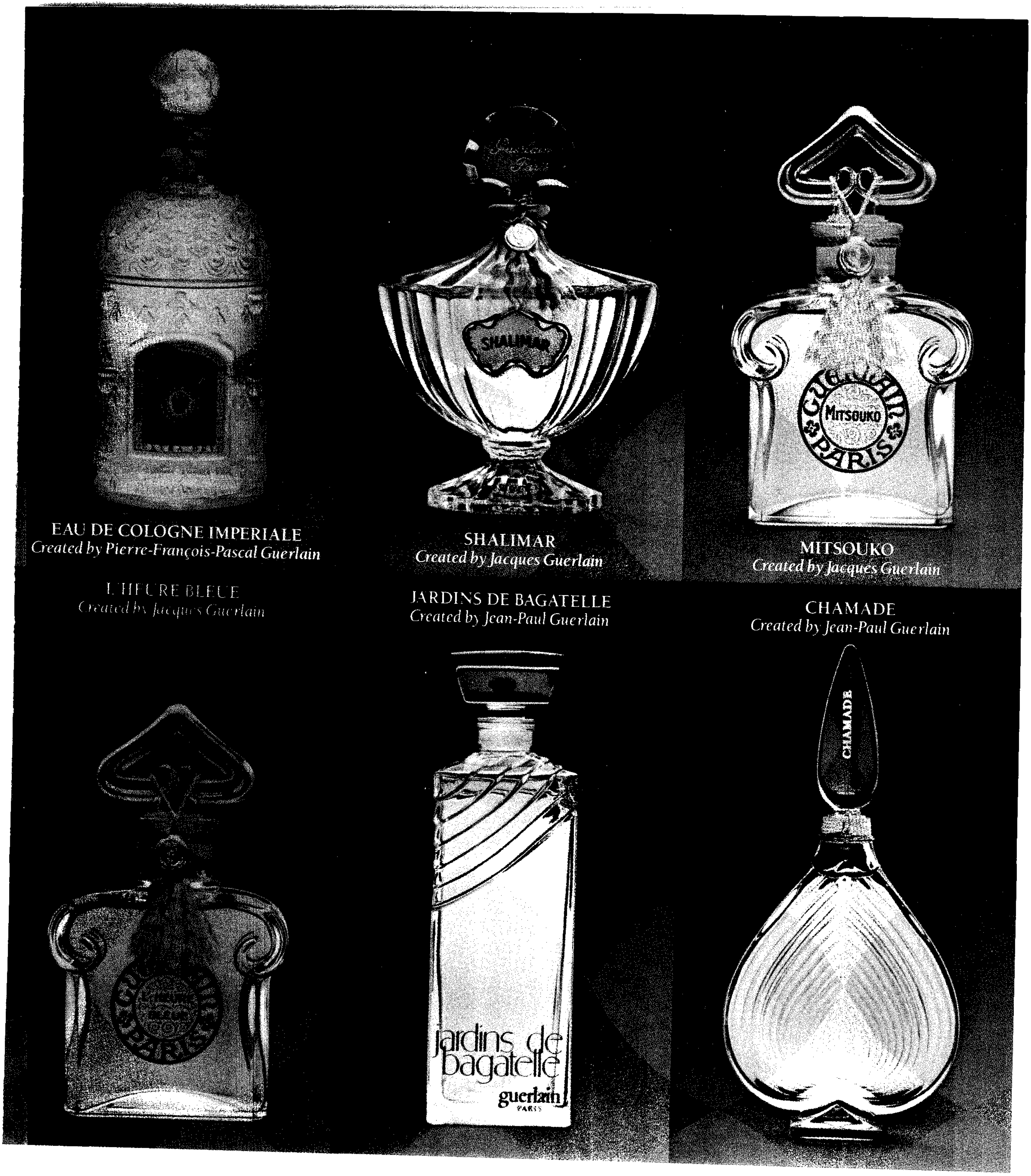
Later, at the station, he told
the drummer he was quitting the band.

The drummer wished him luck
and borrowed ten dollars.

The trumpeter bought a bouquet of roses
and returned to the hotel.

At the desk they told him that the woman had received
his message, and left town on the afternoon train.

—NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER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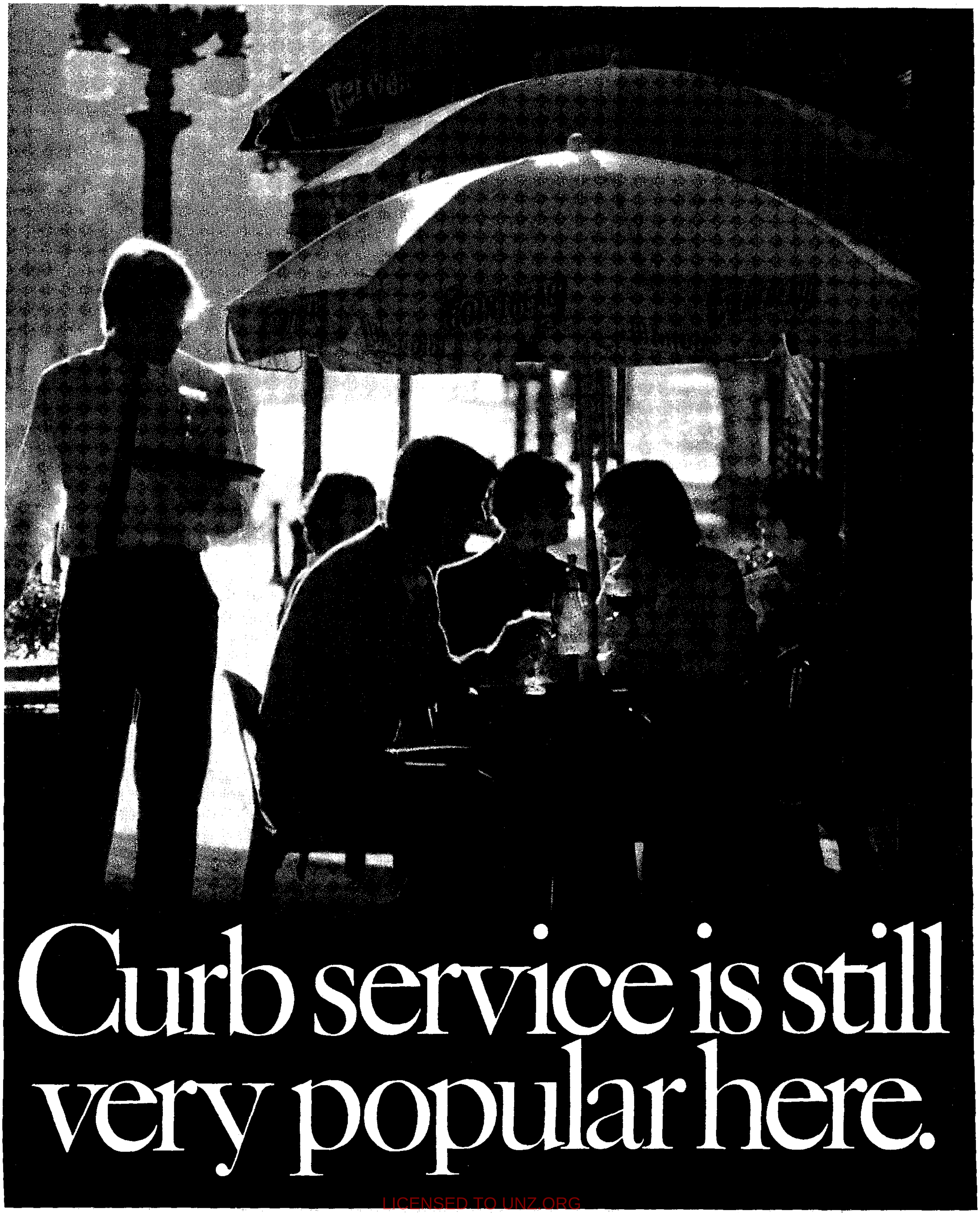


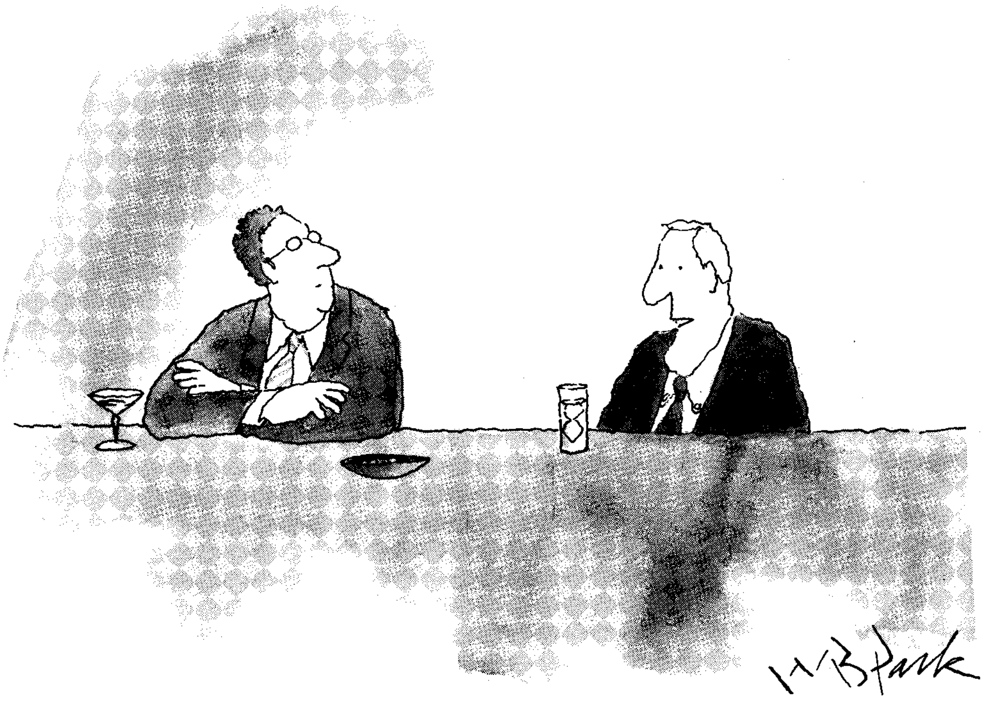
DANCING

Modern Love

ONE hears so much about the death of romance in the relations between the sexes that whenever an artist manages to make a truly romantic work one has to ask where he got the material for it. Usually, the answer is that he got it from the past—the artist has produced a study in nostalgia. Changing sexual attitudes are imbued with a permanent sense of loss. How can we really have lost something, though, and kept the appetite for it? The appetite for romance and all that goes with it—chivalry, the graces of courtship, the charm of intimacy—is in itself romantic. So is the idea that we have lost romance. The new piece with which Paul Taylor opened his season at the City Center is a romantic work about the loss of romance. Set to music by Wagner, it's a full-blown, surgingly lyrical piece that keeps the audience on edge, looking for the stroke of skepticism that never comes. Taylor is perfectly innocent here—as innocent as he can be. He toys with our feelings by not toying with them, and in the end he relaxes us and sends us away happy. The piece is called "Roses," and he has put into it some of his best and most serious work in the pas-de-deux adagio form. What is more, without using devices, relying solely on structure and choice of music, he presses a series of philosophical points about romance and the way we view it.

First, structure. Taylor mounts a large composition for five couples, builds it to a climax, brings it to a close, and then introduces a sixth couple to dance alone while the others rest. The sixth couple, in white, adds nothing substantive to what the five couples, in black and gray, have already done; it adds a slight but noticeable difference of style and sentiment. At the conclusion of their duet, the two dancers in white retire into the group of black-and-gray couples, and the curtain comes down. Why did Taylor need this extra couple? (The audience is more than ready to applaud at the conclusion of the ensemble section.) And why did he place it at the end rather than at the beginning? Why did he prefer a slightly anticlimactic diminuendo effect to what might have been seen as a perfect crescendo in theme-and-variations form? The answers are in the music. If Taylor had used the white couple (Cathy McCann and David Parsons or Kate Johnson and Thomas Evert) at the start of the piece, the music for the duet, an Adagio for Clarinet and Strings composed in the eighteen-twenties, would have compelled him to build *forward* to the music of the Siegfried Idyll, which accompanies the ensemble section. Instead, he builds backward, contradicting the chronology of the two pieces of music and the chronological implications of their respective musical idioms. In the Adagio, the clarinet voices a Bellini-like melody over the strings; it might almost be a transcription of an actual Bellini aria. (Wagner was a great admirer of Bellini, but this Adagio, credited to him in the Taylor program, is now thought to have been composed by the clarinettist H. J. Baermann.) When this bright, linear, florid music *follows* the Siegfried Idyll, with its plushy texture and revolving chromatic progressions, we seem to move backward in time to another era and another range of sentiment. Thus juxtaposed, the two scores do not just form a meditation on two periods of Romanticism spanned by Wagner; they also provide the basis for a Taylor essay in retrospection as, in his staging, the manners and sentiments of one epoch give way to those of a previous epoch. Taylor even suggests that it is a natural thing for the sexes to revert to the imagination of an earlier age—that romance is always nostalgic. We in the audience, watching his dances for "1870" lovers, are displaced onstage by these lovers when they themselves settle back and contemplate the "1820" lovers, in white. (But as romance is always nostalgic, so there are no period steps in these dances—only straightforward, muscular Taylor choreography.)

Romance seeks an ideal image and turns to the "perfection" of the past. The point is worth making; it may even be true. It is, to my mind, the answer to why "Roses" is designed in that peculiar way. But it isn't the answer to the spirit of the times, which keeps crying out that romance is dead. There's a sense in which romance *is* dead for us today; its token representations within the culture don't reverberate the way they used to—the fragrance of roses is faint, even suspect. What seems to have happened since the seventies is that relations between the sexes have been so politicized by the excesses of the women's movement and by the male reaction to those excesses that when love is shown without a political slant it looks old-fashioned. The self-consciousness of "Roses" is attuned to this development, but it's really a reaction to another development—one that poses a continuing problem for any artist, and particularly



"You lose a hell of a lot, but then every now and then you win one."

for any choreographer, who is drawn to the subject of love in our time. The different stimuli we used to employ to let the vicarious or anticipatory pleasures of romance roll through us—namely, popular music, the musical theatre, the movies, dancing cheek-to-cheek—have all dried up, for reasons that have nothing to do with the sexual revolution. Still, their decline strikes with dull force at the expression of romantic sentiment. Choreographers have to work without the musical impulses that used to come from within our culture. Taylor, whose company is now celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, has only recently begun to address this problem. Besides "Roses," he has turned out two other studies of love between men and women, to scores by Brahms and Elgar. The Brahms ("Equinox") has a gentle Edwardian glow. The Elgar ("Sunset") is staged as an episode of the recent past—around the fifties or early sixties, to judge from the women's dresses. But Taylor has carefully enclosed the action in a frame of memory, which activates a distinct mood not of nostalgia but of sorrow. "Sunset" is about things—small and fateful acts—that acquire meaning only in memory, and the fact that it is not here and now endows its image of sexual relations with a special poignancy. Taylor could have used music closer to us in time, but he could not conceivably have found contemporary music of such transparent sympathy and remorse. And therein, I think, lies the problem of all contemporary "romantic" choreography. There is no dance music being written to support it. On the one hand, "Roses" eases out of the problem by implying that our natural mode of association with romantic love is anachronistic. On the other hand, by using nineteenth-century music Taylor is doing just about the only thing a choreographer can do. Lovers whirl on, on the stage as in life, but the music of their exploits is that of another age.

Taylor's choreography is musically so limpid and so instinctively buoyant that when it takes on a score of the dimensions of the Siegfried Idyll it has to look a little undernourished technically. Wagner's harmonically complicated slow-moving tides are, if they are to support any dancing, more suited to the technique of classical ballet, which, unlike the barefoot modern dance, can sustain a long musical line. There are passages in the Siegfried Idyll that seem to call out for the

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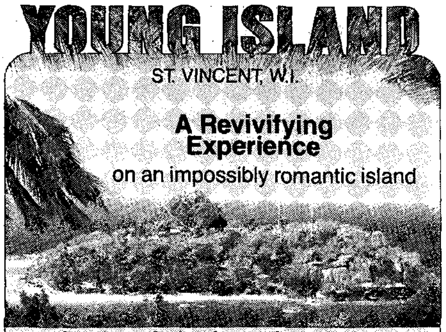

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flow of pointwork and the arrested flow of balances on point. By and large, though, Taylor's dances do sustain the pressure of the music, and in the most exhilarating way—by making us aware of the challenge involved. Taylor turns the chromatic unrest of the music into a kind of dancers' relay, passing the baton from one couple to the next. Relaxing from their play, the dancers slide to the floor and nestle, enveloped in the shimmering warmth of what Wagner intended as a birthday salute to his son Siegfried and perhaps also as an ode to domesticity. The "Bellini" dance strikes up another kind of acquaintance with the music; it is as elaborate and improbable as an acrobatic-adagio act in a hotel ballroom. In a way, it is, I think, meant to reveal the nineteen-thirties to our eyes just as the music reveals the acrobatic bel-canto style of a century earlier. William Ivey Long's costumes reflect the duality of Taylor's conception. The black satin gowns for the women of the Siegfried Idyll are modern (like the gowns in "Cloven Kingdom"), but billow with a suggestion of hoopskirts. Under Donald York, the orchestra plays the chamber version of the Idyll with shining clarity; Anand Devendra is the fine clarinet soloist in the Adagio.

IN 1960, Balanchine made Brahms and love duets fashionable with "Liebeslieder Walzer." In 1969, Eliot Feld paid a fledgling choreographer's tribute to "Liebeslieder" with his "Intermezzo"—three couples in Karinska-style nineteenth-century costumes dancing to selections from the piano music of Opuses 39, 117, and 118. He is now presenting (at the Joyce) "Intermezzo No. 2," with the same number of couples wearing similar costumes and doing similar things to the music of Opus 76, plus more of Opus 118 and one extract from Opus 119. It is an odd work for Feld to have produced—a virtual self-parody. His company is no longer the refined group of dancers he had in 1969, when I was moved to describe "Intermezzo" as "the most brilliant piece of work by an under-thirty choreographer since Paul Taylor's '3 Epitaphs.' " It may be that the blowsy and heavy-handed "Intermezzo No. 2" is a reflection of the declining technical abilities of his dancers. The saddest thing about it, though, is its sacrifice of a poetic vision to the creation of a patented, pretested success. Whatever Feld originally meant to say in "Intermezzo" about Brahms and love and dancing he evidently no longer remembers. In the "Intermezzo" of the eighties, the subject is Feld's own tactical virtuosity in licking the genre a second time. I say that the virtuosity is limited by the dancers' comparatively meagre abilities, but it is constrained even more by the showoffy choreography.

A generally good rule when you have little to work with is: Do less. But one must know what to do less of. Since Feld apparently can't trust his women's point technique, he keeps them flying about in the air in lifts, lifts, and more lifts. This throws the emphasis squarely on the lack of footwork the ballet suffers from. The women do *all* their beats in lifts, none in jumps, and they're so overpartnered they become physically mute—undistinguished puppets dangling from the men's arms. Women who have no fate apart from that wished upon them by their masters are a poor subject for a "romantic" ballet. There were too many lifts in the first "Intermezzo," too, making it in places mechanistic and overdriven, but it did have women with feet and with heads of their own; it even gave one of them a solo. I don't think the effect of subjugation is intended; it's an unhappy consequence of the labored, compensatory technique that Feld applies—his liftomania. But the style of the sequel also suggests that "Intermezzo" has now taken the place in Feld's mind that "Liebeslieder Walzer" had in 1969. The greatest tactical departure that Feld made from Balanchine was to characterize his three couples as bravura, lyrical, and comic. "Intermezzo No. 2" repeats a formula that was a mistake to begin with. Brahms did not write funny music. In the original version of "Intermezzo," nothing was played for laughs. The gagged-up version became traditional, however, and now Feld forces a gagged-up duet into the sequel for no reason other than that he did it the first time. Certainly for no musical reason do we see two dancers lurch through a waltz clutching each other blindly. I can't think why Feld had to produce a second ballet whose net effect is to undo nearly everything that is still good in the first one. It may be, though, that the seeds of destruction were there in whatever made him start playing for laughs in the seventies.

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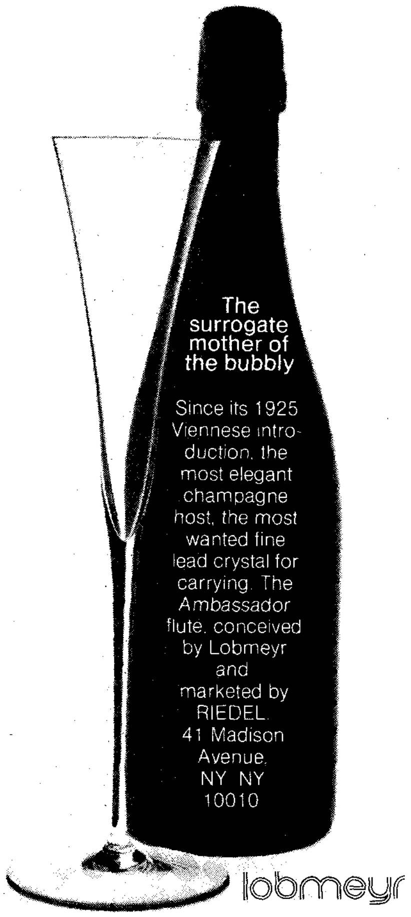
with the sounds and sights of avant-garde rock, is still doing it. Her latest concert, to which she gave the title of a physics equation, "$-p=\frac{\partial H}{\partial q}$," consisted *of an extended pas* de deux based specifically on the theme of love—"the complex tensions of love's romance, eroticism and emotional unrest," to quote the flyer put out by Dance Theatre Workshop. I went to see the piece and was not disappointed. Armitage has dropped most of the inscrutable symbolism that disfigured "Paradise," the last work she showed in New York. With Joseph Lennon, she danced the long pas de deux as a series of legible physical events whose dramatic overtones were clear. At first, the dancers were two extroverts, performing with exaggerated flair as if before an audience in a huge theatre. Gradually, they grew more intimate, dancing as if for each other. But the implicit theatricality of everything they did precluded any effect of real intimacy. This I took to be the main point of the evening; whether as "lovers" or as "dancers," these two were always on. They didn't contribute much more than that to the lore of the pas de deux—their "erotic" number was essentially a variation on Nijinsky's "Faune," and later they added variations on the "Agon" pas de deux—but they certainly put on a colorful and engrossing show.

Armitage, who wore five-inch spike heels when she was not on point, dances with astonishing force and indifference to gravity. She spent much of the evening off balance, bending toward and away from her partner like a flame-tipped sprite with a tallow center. She did bumps on point; then, reversing her terms, she did slow grands battements in those stiletto heels. She is a comedian whose act—annihilating the image and the propriety of classicism—is more amusing each time I see it. Part of my enjoyment comes from the strain Armitage places on definitions. Is she a real destroyer of classicism or a brazen hussy with a primpingly *classique* manner? Someone truly interested in destroying classicism would need to conduct more raids on its technique than Armitage does. Armed with her discontinuities of step and gesture (which she derives from Merce Cunningham), anatomically gifted, she can dance all night without showing you a single phrase, yet her prodigious scale and equilibrium and her conscious theatricality are enough to carry you along. She has evolved a *theatre*



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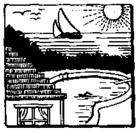

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of dance with herself at the center.

But it isn't all about Armitage. An Armitage evening is also a fashion parade, a light show, and an art-rock concert. She is open to the influences of her collaborators, who are in turn open to the horrific, the kinky, the gorgeous, the new. Charles Atlas, her regular designer, provided the current show with a series of costume changes, using the conventions of punk chic in the style that has become his alone. He takes standard dancewear, dyes it culturally deprived colors like orange or turquoise, mixes in some harlequin blacks and whites, and adds a few comic-book touches (Spiderman boots and gloves, for example). It's so simple, and it looks great on dancers. Atlas also did the lighting for "$-p=\frac{\partial H}{\partial q}$" at its première, earlier this year in Grenoble, France. The lighting designer at D.T.W., Phil Sandström, achieved some striking local effects. At one point, the door at the side of the stage was opened and Armitage danced a solo in the path of light from the adjacent lobby.

The music at Armitage concerts is always loud enough to take the skin off your face. This time, David Linton and Conrad Kinard played an amplified percussion score by Linton. It began with a blistering gong stroke and went on, with breaks, for fifty minutes. Toward the end, the two musicians, who wore white tie and tails, came off their platform and began putting on an act of their own. A moment later, the side door opened again, and Armitage came in stiltwalking and bearing a huge round frame while Lennon approached from the opposite direction encumbered by a large *square* frame that had religious pictures fluttering from it. But for these lapses into total anarchy and inscrutability, the evening was all one solid gesture. Armitage is not for everybody, and there are those who see her as symptomatic of the cynical, pranksterish spirit of the times, if not the spirit of the times itself. Working with Atlas and Jeffrey Lohn, the composer of "Paradise," she has recently completed a film for WGBH, as yet unseen. It was made in Providence, Rhode Island, my home town, and I can hardly wait. It's called "Romance."

—ARLENE CROCE

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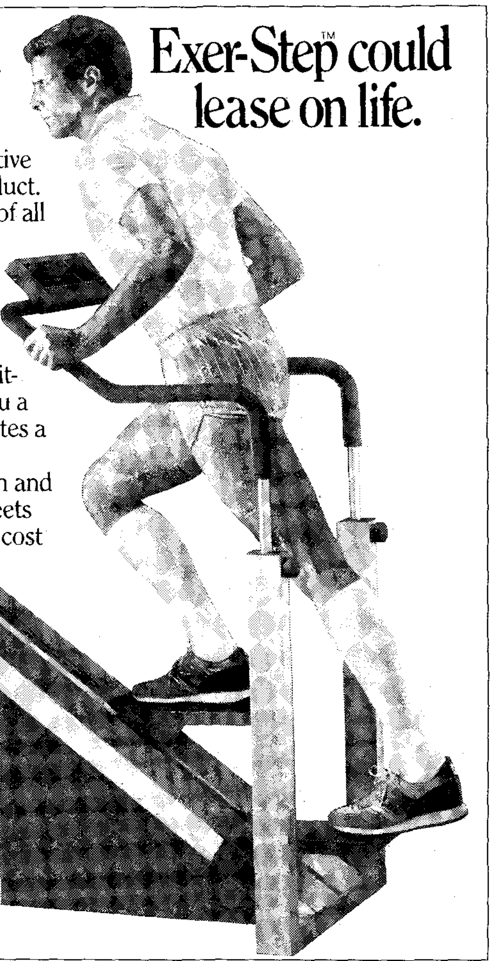

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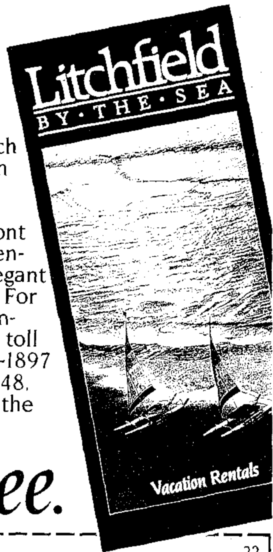

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Expressive, Lucid, Romantic

THE Juilliard String Quartet, forty years old next year, has introduced new quartets by the dozen. Some of them go on to enter the repertory (Elliott Carter's Second and Third Quartets come to mind), some are soon forgotten, and some are revived from time to time. Prophecy is rash, but Donald Martino's String Quartet, of which the Juilliard this month gave the New York première, at a recital in the Juilliard Theatre, seems to me to be a work that should enter the repertory. It proved enthralling at a first hearing, and repeated hearings (by way of a tape recording) each time left me eager to listen to it yet again. It is a rich piece. The quartet was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, to celebrate the Juilliard's twenty years as quartet-in-residence at the Library of Congress, and was first played in the Library last October. It has also been played in Cambridge. It lasts just over half an hour. There are four movements—distinct, but linked by adagio cadenzalike passages. The opening is a twelve-note melody, *ansioso* (a recurrent expressive indication). The first six notes limn a wedge shape, in even quarters: B-flat, A, B, A-flat, C, G. There's a brief hold, and then, in eighths, the next six notes close down again, onto E. The first strain is unisono or in octaves, begun by the cello, with viola, second violin, and then first violin stealing into the melody (with octave displacements that give to each player's line a different shape and subtly shift the color balances on each note). The second strain has holds that add harmonies to the melody. Then, differently transformed on each instrument, the shape is speeded up, slowed down, and speeded up again to lead into the energetic first subject, on the first violin, which springs recognizably from the same shape but leaps exultantly across octaves and has a sharp rhythmic profile.

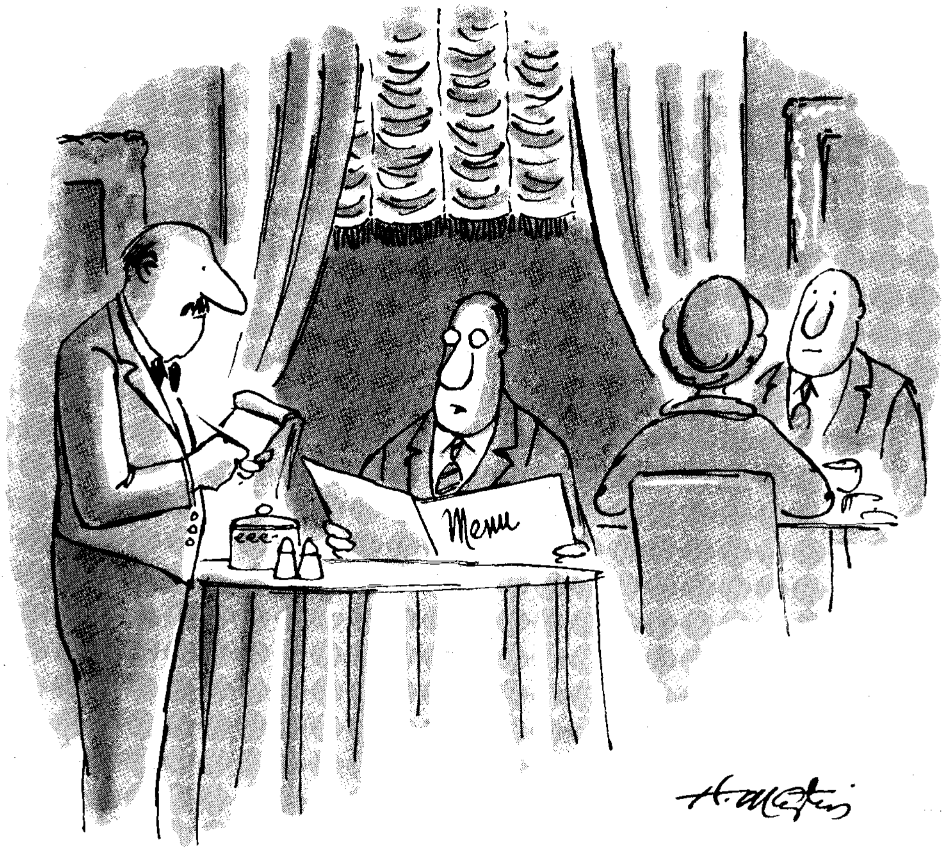
The score is published by Dantalian. I've made small analytical sorties into it, always with satisfying results. But analysis—discovering the constructional details of a span of music—tells nothing about merit. I must use more emotive language—as Elaine Barkin, the author of the New Grove entry on Martino, does when, after speaking of "the projection of 'simultaneously-progressing total-set forms' . . . delineated by registral stratification and differentiated dynamics and articulation," she concludes:

> Martino's music has been characterized as expressive, dense, lucid, dramatic, romantic, all of which are applicable. But it is his ability—as he engages himself in a world of virtuoso music-making—to conjure up for the listener a world of palpable presences and conceptions . . . that seems most remarkable.

The vigorous melodies of the quartet are elating, the slow melodies affecting. Beneath much of the first movement there seems to run a vein of seductive, lilting waltz tune. The second movement is a mercurial scherzo-rondo, the third a set of variations, each tautly characterized. The finale contemplates what has gone before; in the words of the composer's program note, "at first it seems to be trying to find a resolution to the problem of summarizing previous arguments," until after alternate propositions "the ultimate solution is found in music reminiscent of the Andantino cantabile of Movement III."

The music is precisely imagined and is set down with meticulous instructions to the performers about articulation, tempo, and rhythm. However, they are then urged, after "having observed the mathematics," to let "expressive character" and "rubato character" be their guides. The music is alive in every line. As one gets to know it better, delight in the progress is enhanced by appreciation of the fine contributory details. I'm no string player, but it seems to me this quartet must be good to play. It's certainly good to listen to.

The Juilliard Quartet's performance was eloquent—amazingly brilliant and sure, always expressive. The concert began with two of the earlier works composed for the ensemble: Irving Fine's String Quartet (1952), a dramatic piece (there is a recording by the Juilliard, with its original personnel, on CRI); and Fred Lerdahl's First String Quartet (1978), an interesting and skillful composition, which I described in these pages after its New York première and was glad to hear again.



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ANDRÉ EMILIANOFF and Anne-Marie McDermott began their recital in Merkin Hall this month with Samuel Barber's early Cello Sonata, Opus 6, and ended it with Brahms' F-Major Cello Sonata, Opus 99. The Barber is a lyrical, beautiful work, and Mr. Emilianoff's perfor-

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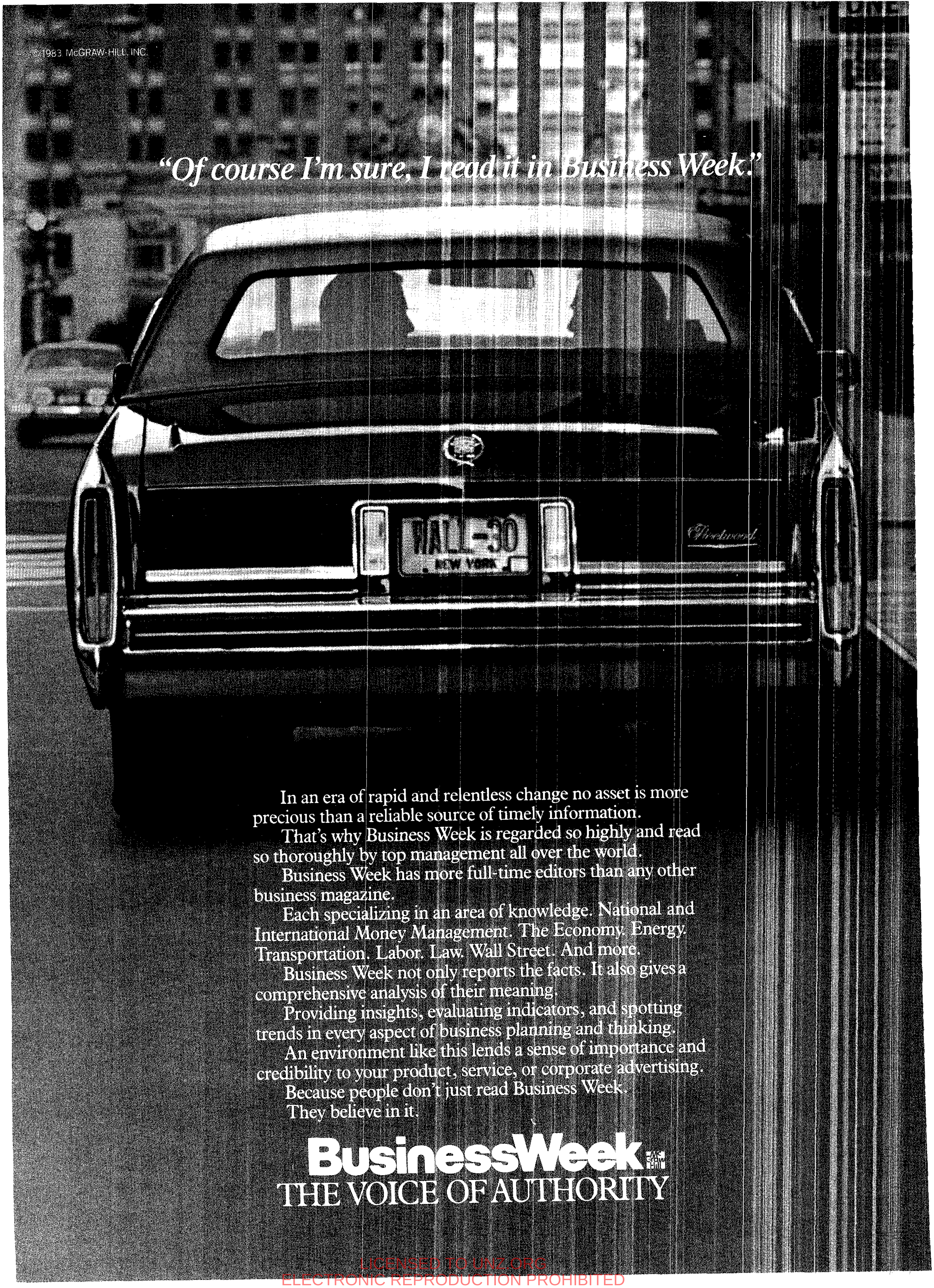

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mance was poetic. He gave a fervid, large-scale account of the Brahms, pausing to mop his brow after the first movement and giving the listener a chance to metaphorically mop his. This was cello playing in the large grand manner, in the line of Piatigorsky and Rostropovich, but it wasn't too much—not even for listeners attuned to the more classical Brahms of, say, Pierre Fournier. The passion that informed big melodies and exquisite pianissimi alike was communicative. What was odd was the player's avoidance of rich portamento, which cellists of Brahms' day would certainly have used and which would have matched and intensified the other aspects of Mr. Emilianoff's approach.

George Perle's Sonata for Cello and Piano, composed for Mr. Emilianoff, had its first performance. It's an eighteen-minute work in three movements preceded by a long, striking cadenza—almost a movement in itself—for the cello, unaccompanied except at two points. The piece has the elegance, the grace, the deftness so regularly discerned in Perle's recent scores that he may be wondering whether he, the critics, or both are starting to repeat themselves. The new Cello Sonata inhabits the world of Serenade III and the Concertino. The forms are clear, the textures limpid. There's also a vein of elegiac poetry, apt to the cello's emotional tones. Some of the espressivo melodies, moving by semitone over rich harmonies, even brought César Franck to mind.

Two happy finds completed an enjoyable and varied program: Nicolai Roslavets' Cello Sonata, billed as a New York première, and the epilogue of Charles Wakefield Cadman's "A Mad Empress Remembers." Roslavets is known for having arrived at a twelve-note system independently of Schoenberg; this short one-movement sonata, however, dating from 1921, is closer to Scriabin in its dense, rapturous harmonies. "A Mad Empress Remembers" is a late work of Cadman, for cello and orchestra, dating from 1944 and composed for (but not played by) Piatigorsky. When I heard a studio performance of Cadman's opera "Shanewis"—first done by the Met, in 1918—I thought he deserved to be known by more than the songs "At Dawning" (recorded by Mary Garden, John McCormack, Richard Tauber, and many others) and "From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water" (recorded by Lillian Nordica, Alma Gluck, Jeanette MacDonald, and many others). The epilogue of "A Mad Empress Remembers" (the Empress is Carlota of Mexico), a poignant and striking piece, roused curiosity to hear the complete work, in its orchestral dress.

Miss McDermott, an accomplished and sensitive pianist, played boldly. The balance was not that of a soloist-with-accompanist recital—not in terms of sound. But in terms of temperament it was. I often wonder why at violin or cello recitals the string player turns his back on the pianist—why the platform layout is not so arranged that mutual glances, such as string-quartet players exchange, can pass between the partners before important entries. As it was, Miss McDermott had to read her cues from Mr. Emilianoff's back. She did so ably—the ensemble between the pair was, in fact, excellent—but, particularly in the Brahms sonata, she scarcely took the lead decisively, even in passages that require it.

STEPHEN PAULUS'S "Reflections: Four Movements on a Theme of Wallace Stevens," composed for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, had its première last month at a concert conducted by Pinchas Zukerman in St. Paul, and was brought to New York last week, over WNYC, by an American Public Radio presentation of the concert. The movements are entitled "The Holy Hush," "Unsubdued Elations," "Isle Melodious (Remembrance of Awakened Birds)," and "Where Triumph Rang Its Brassy Phrase"—tags from the Stevens poem "Sunday Morning." The music, however, didn't seem to me to have much to do with the poem. The lines are rich in phrases from which almost any pieces of music might be titled. (How about a suite with the titles "Ambiguous Undulations," "The Strings of Our Insipid Lutes," "Love Whispered," and "Chant in Orgy"? Or maybe "Spontaneous Cries," "Echoing Hills," "Grievings in Loneliness," and "A Chant of Paradise"?) It's an agreeable twenty-minute stretch of music that slips down easily. Paulus is a bright, fluent inventor with a ready lyric gift. Yet it's disconcerting to hear music by a fairly young composer (he was born in 1949) that could have been written seventy years ago—and some of it earlier than that. A hint of Wagner here, of Rimsky-Korsakov there, of early Stravinsky everywhere. I suppose there's no reason that the ascent in the "Tristan"

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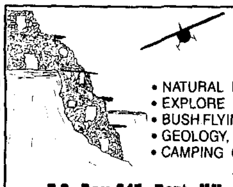

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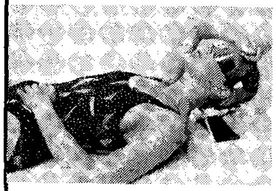

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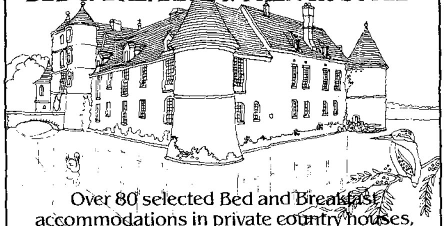

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Act III prelude shouldn't climb from a soft bell-tree shimmer to depict holy hush. The surging violin unisons that open "Die Walküre" can well serve to depict unsubdued elations. (Are Paulus's unisons also played across two strings at once? It sounded as if they were.) *In an intermission talk,* the composer said he'd become more conservative than he used to be. And I, who so much enjoyed and admired his first opera, "The Village Singer," six years ago, could only agree.

"Reflections" is dedicated to the memory of William Harwood, who conducted "The Village Singer" and also Paulus's second opera, "The Postman Always Rings Twice." Mr. Harwood died last year, suddenly, and America lost one of its most inspiring young conductors. I first heard his work ten years ago, at a Yale student performance of "Idomeneo," and on the strength of it called him one of the finest Mozartians of our day. A "Magic Flute" in St. Louis in 1980 confirmed that estimate. He would have made his City Opera début last season.

The broadcast was in good sound but was presented in a way to provoke any musical person to switch off before the concert itself began: first a signature tune, then background music played behind some drivel about music's magic powers, the announcement of the program, and preliminary conversation with the composer. Musicians boycott restaurants, stores, hotels that pipe in music as a "background," flinch when to reach the offices of W. W. Norton, the publishers of "Books That Live in Music," they must ride in a music-loud elevator. They don't expect to hear background music from a serious radio station.

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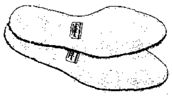

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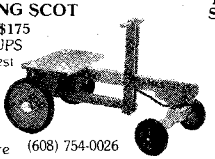

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anthology of electronic music: Edgard Varèse's "Déserts," Otto Luening's "In the Beginning," two pieces by Vladimir Ussachevsky, and Milton Babbitt's "Vision and Prayer." Extensive sampling has revealed that the tapes are carefully made. (Julius Katchen's 1952 performance of Rorem's exuberant Second Piano Sonata sounds more realistic than many a modern recording.) Since the best way of understanding contemporary music is to hear it again and again, I hope these cassettes will be listened to widely. In a well-ordered musical world, they would be on sale in every concert hall, so that whenever a work by one of the composers represented stirred listeners' curiosity they could discover more about him.

"Complete Program Notes" is a legend on each label, and a good deal of helpful information has been packed into the little folders enclosed with the cassettes. But complete, no. Texts are missing for the compositions with words. In Jan DeGaetani's singing of "Syringa," Bethany Beardslee's of "Vision and Prayer," Phyllis Bryn-Julson's of Rorem's "Nantucket Songs" one catches few of the lines. When the performances appeared in disc form, text sheets were included. However, CRI tells me it will send the sheets to any buyer of the cassettes who asks for them. It's also worth getting the complete catalogue, covering thirty years of recording activity; the CRI office is at 170 West 74th Street, New York 10023. Anyone interested in American contemporary music also needs the catalogue of New World Records, 701 Seventh Avenue, New York 10036.—ANDREW PORTER

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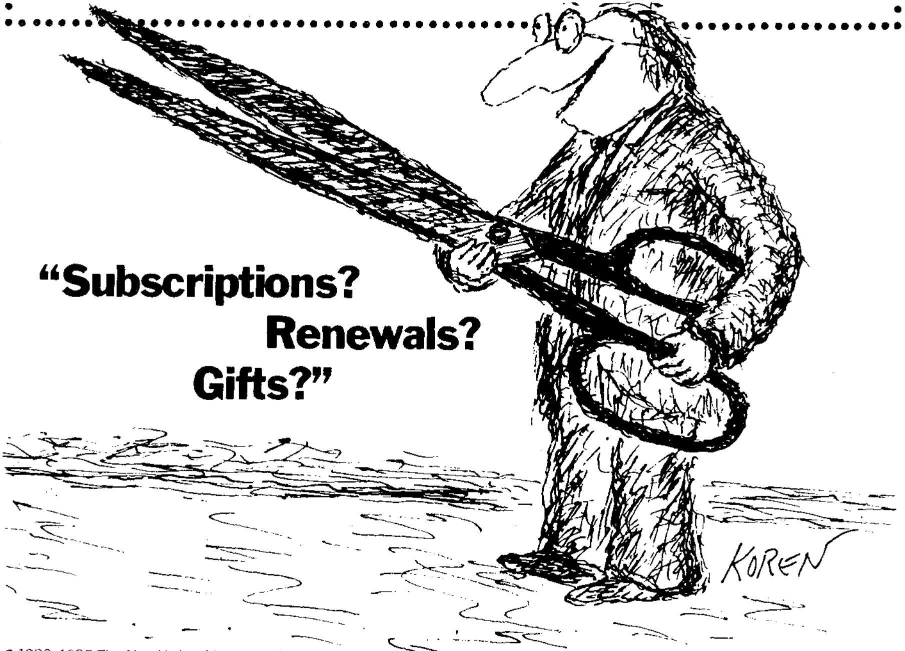
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BOOKS

Crossings

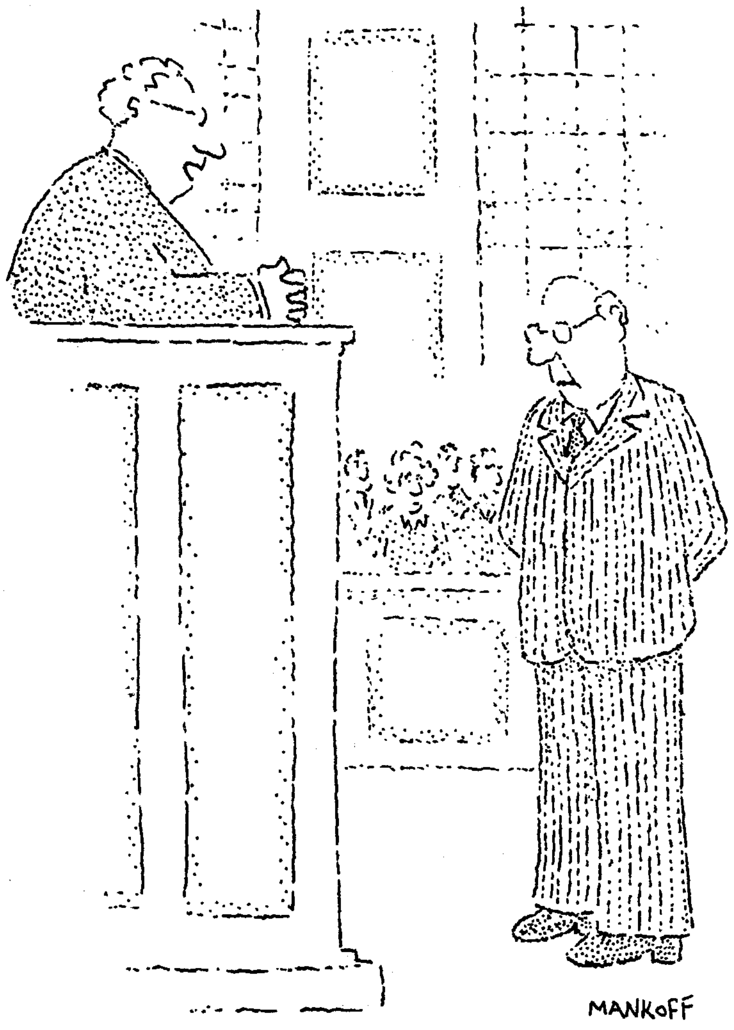
THERE are poetic novels: prose tales and fictions in which the writer seeks to give to his or her style the concentration, the rhythm, the musical order of verse. More rarely, there are poets' novels: pieces of narrative fiction that seem to spring from an implicit set of poems, and that even include poetry at decisive moments—inventions in prose, which a poet borrows in order to express more spaciously, more self-critically, perhaps, something central to his poetry and to his life as a poet. Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago," with its crowning set of "Zhivago" poems, is a stellar example.

Elaine Feinstein is not only among the best readers and translators we have of modern Russian verse. She is a subtle, poignant poet in her own right, and the author of a number of intensely crystallized, allusive fictions that are truly the novels of a poet. The pulse of narrative and of dramatic voice is vivid in her verse. Everything she has published is instinct with caring, with a rare intelligence of pain. "The Border" (St. Martin's/Marek; $10.95) climaxes in a poem, ascribed to one of the characters. This poem is neither ornament nor chance coda. It is latent in the entirety of the brief, densely packed novel that precedes it.

To its advantage, this poetic stamp is not one of actual style. There is no poetic prose, no lyric display in "The Border." Mrs. Feinstein writes sparely; the pace is merciless. Nonetheless, this is very distinctly a poet's novel: by virtue of its allusiveness, of its kaleidoscopic shifts of focus, of its organization, which is one of narrative blocks or stanzas. And the closing poem, in turn, is a reprise and reading of the story.

A young, American-born Oxford historian, Saul Wendler, is in Australia visiting his grandmother, Inge. Europe and its murderous past are very far away, but Saul's visit takes place during the Jewish High Holidays, between the New Year and the Day of Atonement. Remembrance is in the autumn air. It is his late grandfather, the left-wing playwright and poet Hans Wendler, whom the young historian has come to inquire about. Watchful, amused, recalled to a world her grandson can scarcely imagine, Inge knows better. Saul's true quarry is the myopic, gently dishevelled refugee whom Hans Wendler met in Paris in the autumn of 1938, and whose suicide, at the French-Spanish border in September, 1940, coincided so strangely with Hans's own violent death. It is the elusive but numinous presence of Walter Benjamin that the young researcher is pursuing. Inge gives her grandson a briefcase. It contains the diary that Hans Wendler kept in Vienna in the early, catastrophic months of 1938; Inge's own journal, jotted down in Paris during the period from September to the end of November of that same year; the five letters that Hans received from his Communist mistress, Hilde Dorf, who had left Paris for the fatal haven of Moscow; and, above all, the three-part poem on the theme of Dido which Hans Wendler composed in exile. Together with the framing episodes, set in Sydney more than forty years afterward, these memorabilia make up the novel.

The narrative points of view, the tonality of the different voices shift delicately. Inge's account of her husband's and Walter Benjamin's last hours at Port Bou is harried and fragmentary, as if the events had passed from the loving trust of her own recollection into the questioning, detached sphere of public history. Obliquely, Elaine Feinstein weaves what we know of the actual life of Benjamin into the fiction of Hans and Inge Wendler. The crisis in their marriage is that which was experienced in fact by Benjamin in his marriage to Dora Pollak. Hilde Dorf is patterned on Asja Lacis, Walter Benjamin's lover. In turn, the Dorf letters from Moscow, with their muffled hints of nearing disaster, echo the disenchantment, the solitude of Benjamin's posthumously published Moscow diary. With the touch of a craftsman, Feinstein has made of Benjamin, who scarcely figures at all in the direct narrative, the constant center, the point of manifold intersections, in her novel. Indeed, the novel itself may have arisen from the legend, explored by his great friend and chronicler Gershom Scholem, that Benjamin at the point of death entrusted to a fellow-refugee a briefcase containing the manuscript of his in-



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tended masterpiece—the study of Paris, "capital of the XIXth century."

The deftest of Mrs. Feinstein's transpositions is one of sex. Inge Wendler is a physicist; Hans is an aesthete and man of letters. It is Inge who strives for hard-edged, impersonal truth, and Hans who exhibits the self-forgiving pathos, the imprecisions, the licensed intuitiveness of an artistic or "feminine" temper. Their relationship founders on the intellectual and emotional antinomies between the imperative of utopian fantasy in Hans and the positivism, the scrupulous attendance to matter, and the reality principle in Inge's research and style of being. The public acclaim won by Inge as a scientist irritates Hans; the brief lustre of a play of his in the Paris refugee world, in turn, underwrites the edged overtness of his adultery. The novel's treatment of this theme is masterly:

> He will not let me question him. He will not let me react naturally in any way. I have to swallow my fear and my rage or else he will not come home at all. I know that in some womanly piece of myself from my adolescence. I made one attempt to explain the severity of that demand.
>
> But as soon as he began to feel the blackness and bitterness rise in me, he moved towards the door. Hans, what am I to do with my rage if you won't let me speak it out? It will kill me. I shall be the one that dies, not you, you old hypochondriac. He paused only to ask whether I had made any further inquiries about visas.

Hans's reply, insofar as there can be one, is to be found in a superb stanza of his interlocked poems:

> Things come too late to save.
> On the last boat, we'll sing
> old prayers, and some will dream of
> quiet, but the sea will have most of us.
> I am not prepared for white soot,
> cold ash, or the red sands of Australia.
> Forget me,
> Dido: The cruel cannot be blessed.

Only a true poet could have brushed against the hideous reference to the Holocaust in that "white soot, cold ash" or made the closing line so succinctly ambiguous. The pain that adultery inflicts is cause for damnation; so, perhaps, is the inability to forget it. Dido and Aeneas will meet again, as we know, in the dreams of death.

The passage I have quoted from Inge's diary almost immediately precedes Hans's first encounter with Walter Benjamin. The effect is electric. Hans qualifies Benjamin as "magical," and says of him, "A Marxist who is not a materialist. He has come to grips

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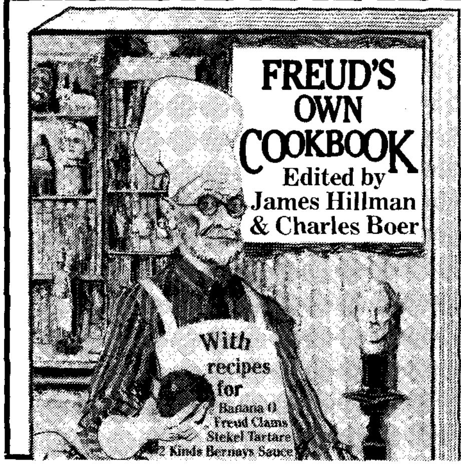

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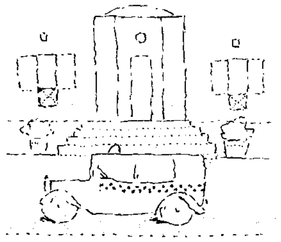

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with all the horrors of our time." Benjamin uses the Cabala to understand *the apocalyptic evil abroad in the* world. But at the same time he knows, he writes penetratingly about Brecht and dialectical materialism. Momentarily, the aura of Benjamin's presence heals Hans and Inge. She says of Hans, "His lips are warm, and his tongue is in my mouth, and I am not dreaming. He calls me lovely, blesses me. I am radiant with happiness. Fearless." But the political situation and the fate of the hounded become ever more desperate. Benjamin is penniless, and Hans lends him a little of his and Inge's money: "In return, he offered me one of his death capsules, from which I turned in horror." Walter Benjamin, in whom the life of the spirit is incomparable, is at home with death. In Elaine Feinstein's novel he has, in fact, spoken only one sentence: "I can hardly stay alive on what I earn here." It is an epitaph that is resonant beyond the concrete circumstance. In Port Bou, Inge feels "hypnotized" by the logic of Benjamin's suicide, and "Hans, too, seemed to pale at the physical evidence of peace that the silent body offered beneath its covers."

As he becomes, more and more, a talismanic, shaping presence in current philosophic and literary awareness, as this presence rebukes the attempts of modish cultural journalism or "New Leftism" to appropriate its arcane, profoundly metaphysical and Judaic powers, Walter Benjamin has been made the subject of a number of fictional and poetic treatments. None of these have, until now, carried conviction. Like Wittgenstein (on whom at least one very great novel, Thomas Bernhard's "Correction," and one short story of compelling imagination have been produced), Benjamin will take a long time to come into focus. The poised discretion, the indirection of Mrs. Feinstein's depiction signal a tact—a measured touch—more than technical. In a way all too infrequent in today's fiction and "fact-fiction," "The Border" enacts a central principle of humane respect. It does honor to its characters and, in close consequence, to its readers. May they be many.

—GEORGE STEINER

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

MEN AND ANGELS, by Mary Gordon (Random House; $16.95). Anne Foster is the heroine's name—just to emphasize that her maternal instinct dominates. In a library, for instance, seated among scholars, she feels like a fraud because her mind is on her two young children. Anne Foster is an art historian who has been chosen to write the catalogue for an exhibit of paintings by an American woman who focussed on domestic scenes featuring women and children when Surrealism was in vogue. Now, forty-five years after her death, her work is being reassessed. Chapters featuring chats with the painter's self-confident daughter-in-law and excerpts from the painter's frank journals and heartless letters, mostly about and to her unhappy son, alternate with chapters featuring Anne Foster's crazy au-pair girl, a religious zealot who has good reason to hate her mother and whose love for Anne, like her hatred for the daughter-in-law, is warped. The predictable story, spanning an academic year, is composed in a counterfeit, dated style, like what someone who has not read Henry James might think Henry James is like. Its highlights are some alarming allusions to angels. "What exalted past had she dropped down from?" begins a query about a Fifth Avenue saleslady, and a Thanksgiving turkey is "human, comic on its platter."

LOLA, by Delacorta (Summit; $9.95). A Swiss bank account? The trickster Gorodish and his unrequited sidekick Alba have come a long way in no time (she is not yet fourteen) since "Nana," "Diva," and "Luna," but their raison d'être is still to fish for moneyed fools. This time, the bait—an ad placed in a Paris paper—soon has them wondering who has hooked whom as, lured by a corpse called Catfish, they dodge a goon they call Charon while cruising the Seine under cover of darkness, and as they make an uncomfortable tour of Cannes on the trail and in the trunk of a Detroit-made "white whale," which may lead them to a Detroit-born rock star, named Lola, worth a million dollars. The series' raison d'être remains Alba, who still fails to persuade Gorodish that she is going on *vingt-et-un*, even when she does her version of a *film noir* vamp, and especially when she washes down six croissants with an order of hot chocolate, or makes an hors d'oeuvre of an entire Camembert and a Brie—"a small Brie," Delacorta concedes.

GENERAL

Workers: Worlds of Labor, by Eric Hobsbawm (Pantheon; $19.95 cloth, $11.95 paper). A collection of essays, arguments, and lectures written during the past twenty years which deal with the industrial working classes, particularly in nineteenth-century Britain. Several articles are theological disputes with the author's fellow-Marxists, in which the revolution, like Armageddon, is the center of eschatological investigations to explain why it has not happened. But most of the essays are more interesting to the general reader. They describe, for example, how religion ceased to matter when workers moved from the country to the city, or show the continuity a historian can find between preindustrial workers' organizations, such as the guilds, and later mutual-help societies and trade unions. In these essays Mr. Hobsbawm demonstrates an astute, almost artistic feeling for particulars as well as a historian's mastery of sources and facts.

On the Shores of the Mediterranean, by Eric Newby (Little, Brown; $19.95). Mr. Newby ("A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush") and his wife have a house in Italy—in Tuscany—and it was there that they began the leisurely jaunt around the Mediterranean which he unhurriedly describes in this book. They made the circuit clockwise: first to Venice, then down the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia and Albania, through Greece to Istanbul and the long Turkish coast, to Israel and Jerusalem, up the Nile to the Great Pyramid, along the Muslim shores of North Africa, briefly into Spain, and home by way of Nice and a big celebratory dinner at the Hôtel Négresco ("dishes of such insubstantial-looking beauty that one was reminded of eighteenth-century water-colours of flowers and vegetables"). They travelled by rented car, by bus, by train, and, as all tourists must, many miles by foot. Almost everything interests Mr. Newby—the commercialism of the mountain monasteries in Greece, the bigness of the great covered bazaar in Istanbul (nearly three thousand shops), the crass enlargement of the space for wailers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the

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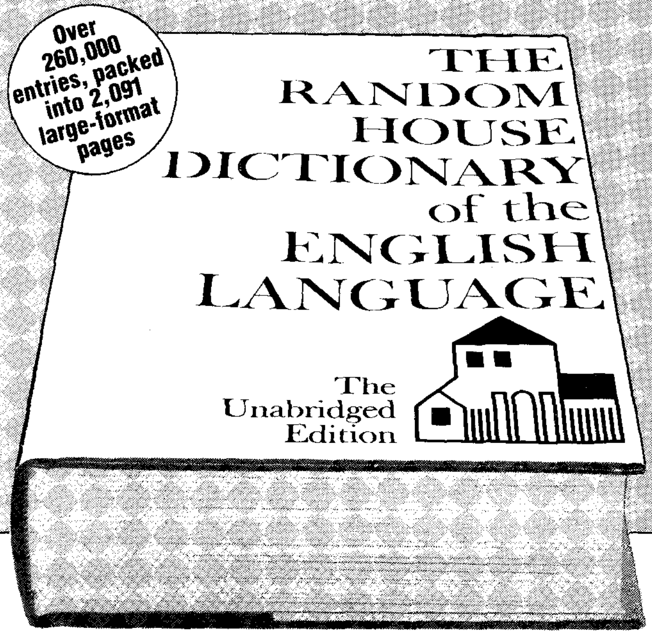
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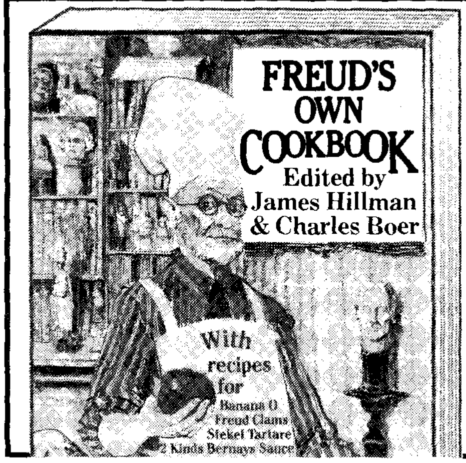

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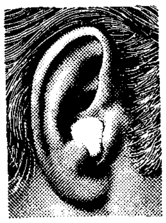

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sunrise over the Great Pyramid (where a would-be guide addressed him with "Good morning, King Solomon" and signed off with "In a whiles, crocodiles"), the Islamic rigidity of Libya. He also, like a proper traveller, tells us what he ate and drank, where and how he slept. And he has done (perhaps overdone) his homework on the relevant local history, ancient and modern. It was not an easy or a comfortable trip, and when we reach the grand Négresco it is hard not to believe that the Newbys fully deserved their ($192) feast there.

NOTE: Vincent Crapanzano's "Waiting: The Whites of South Africa," a study of the effects of apartheid on South Africa's ruling minority, has been published by Random House ($19.95). Much of the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker.*

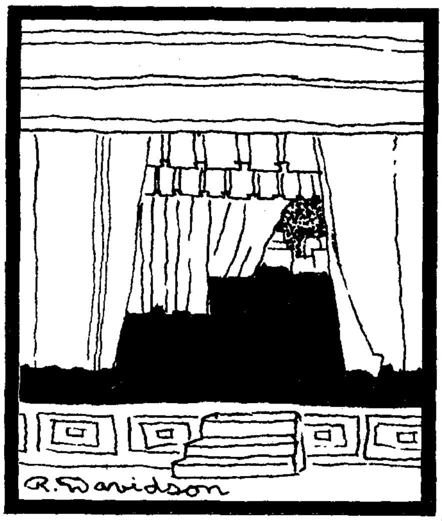
MYSTERY AND CRIME

THE LONELY SILVER RAIN, by John D. MacDonald (Knopf; $15.95). Well, after twenty-odd adventures in as many years, Travis McGee has begun to age. As he tells it, "I had moved a generation away from the beach people. To them I had become a sun-brown rough-looking fellow of an indeterminate age who did not quite understand their dialect, did not share their habits—either sexual or pharmacological—who thought their music unmusical, their lyrics banal and repetitive, a square fellow who read books and wore yesterday's clothes. But the worst realization was that they bored me." His boredom, however, is relieved, and in the usual way. There is a willing—nay, eager—woman, and an involvement with a stolen oceangoing yacht, a nasty triple murder, some big-time cocaine dealing, a gang war. There is also an ending—with tearful smiles and sobbing strings—that is best left unread.

•

In October, after a year's planning, Saatchi went shopping in New York and bought up its first market research outfit, Yankelovich Skelly and White. Second strand in place. Last month it struck again. More surprisingly, perhaps, it snapped up the Hay Group of Philadelphia, one of the foremost international management consultancies with 27 offices in 97 countries and a blue chip client list. Third strand in place.—*Boston Globe.*

Sort of.



DRAMA

"...an unerring eye for the dramatic" is only one of the virtues ascribed by *The New Yorker** to C. V. Wedgwood, but it's an uncommon one among historians these days. And although her narrative history of the world from the dawn of man to the dawn of the modern age stops just short of Shakespeare, it's clear that like him, she believes that "all the world's a stage."

What players, what sets, what *tableaux vivants* she presents to us! In an era when historians, by and large, have become technicians seeking to distill from the past some form of statistical science, the narrative art that informs every page of *The Spoils of Time* is a welcome reminder that history is indeed an intricate tapestry of individual lives that tells a colorful, fascinating, and important tale.

From Gilgamesh to Gutenberg, from Cathay to Castile, from the Great Pyramid of ancient Egypt to the great cathedrals of medieval France, C. V. Wedgwood presents "history as an immediate experience," in the words of *The Saturday Review*. We've come to expect nothing less than excellence from Dame Veronica; still, when was the last time you heard a volume of history described as "compulsively readable"?

But writing is as much an art as is practicing history, a truth delightfully confirmed in each sentence of *The Spoils of Time*. C. V. Wedgwood is an artist of both, and it's hard to imagine a pageant more entertaining *or* more epochal than the one she has produced in her wonderful new book.

L. L. Day
Editor-at-Large

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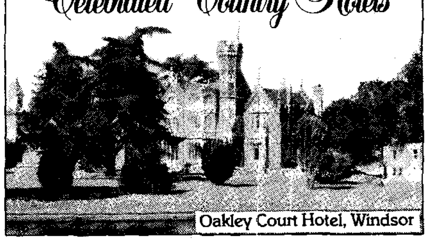

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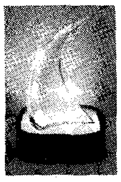

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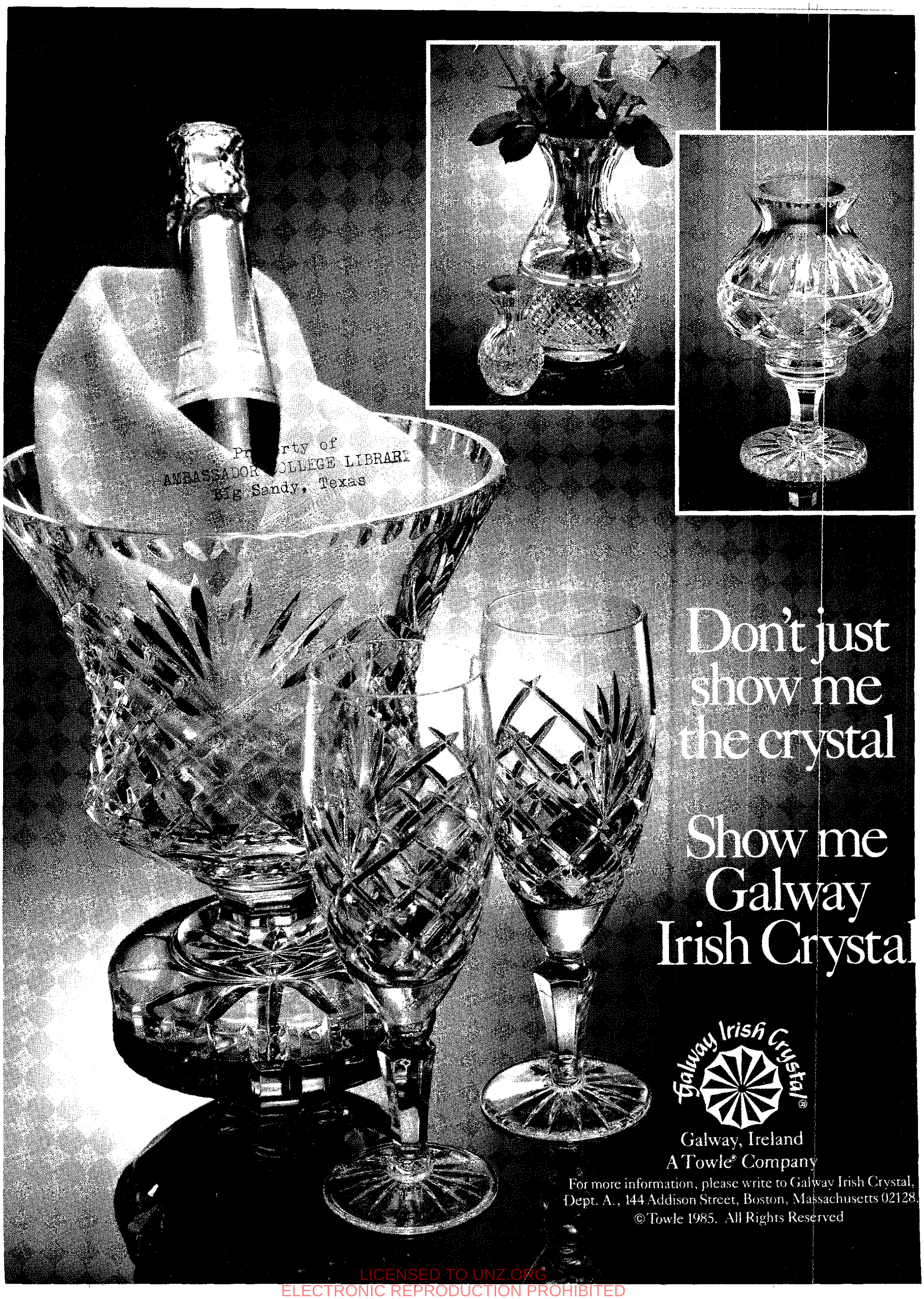
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